

A BIBLE-BASED MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE PASTORAL LEADERSHIP
TRANSITION IN THE PHILADELPHIE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

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by
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This project will address the issue of transitions of pastors in church appointments in the Seventh-Day Adventist tradition. Presently, there are no models of ministry for pastors or congregations in new assignments. Thus, the ministry of the church is stymied. If a model/template of pastoral changes is in place, the pastor and church can adjust and work effectively through the transitional period. The Philadelphia Church in Malden, Massachusetts is the context. This project proposes to develop a model of transition by conducting four workshops for members. The evaluation will use an Embedded Mixed Methodology with pre- and post-test surveys.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way.” (Psalm 37:23, NASB). I thank God for guiding my steps and for watching over my life from my birth to this day. This achievement would not have been possible without constant reliance on the promise that God will watch over my life and watch over my “coming and my going.” God has sent on my way many individuals to whom I am grateful. I can only name a few.

Dr. Jean Flavio Monestime relentlessly urged me to begin this doctoral program and was ready to encourage me at every step. My mentor, Dr. Ralph Williamson, who from day one has been a constant source of reassurance, both academically and in ministry. Dr. Williamson was committed to seeing us through this program and has always been available to me and our focus group members. I am also grateful to my peers who in many ways have helped this work. A hearty thank you is extended especially to Dr. Willie Wright, Dr. Calixte Colbert, Dr. Naomi Mackall, Dr. James Morris, Dr. Sinclair Forbes and Pastors Kyron John and Nathan Lises.

Thank you to my professional Associate, Dr. Daniel Honoré, who encouraged me to see this through completion. I am also grateful to Dr. Kenneth Cummings for his professionalism and counsel in editing and formatting this work to perfection. I will be forever grateful to my family, especially my wife Myra Omeler for her unshakable support and steadfast faithfulness.

There are many others who are not named that have directly or indirectly contributed to the success of this project. Among them are those who participated in the surveys and the many local church members through the years who have organized welcome and farewell dinners and services for my family when we were in transitions. To all of you I say thank you and for all of you, I pray that God will continue to “keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore” (Psalm 121:7-8, NIV).

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the good health of my mother Lunie Omeler and to the memory of my father Emmanuel Omeler who died on December 22, 1991 while giving a bible study. My father who served the church as evangelist, lay pastor and first Elder for as long as I can remember, drilled in me the need to respect all pastors regardless of their shortcomings or abilities. He taught me more in life and ministry than I will ever learn from any school or university.

I also dedicate this work to pastors and local church leaders who will inevitably go through pastoral transitions. The implementation of this transition model will contribute to smooth, effective and rewarding pastoral transition experiences for you in the future.

I dedicate this work to the children of our churches who are often overlooked during pastoral transition periods. Above all, I dedicate this work to the glory of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has sustained me through life's journey.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASV	American Standard Version
ESV	English Standard Version
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
SDA	Seventh-Day Adventist

INTRODUCTION

My life history as a child and young adult has been shaped by my religious upbringing and tradition of Seventh Day Adventism. As a child, I have wonderful memories of pastors and school principals where I lived and grew up in Haiti. Some of these memories include teachers. As fond as many of these memories are, there are also some painful ones. These painful memories are of these pastors and principals who were reassigned by the general church leadership. These changes were painful in that many of these persons had become like family to us. Later in life as a minister of the gospel, I have witnessed the joy of serving the church and the pain of decisions that have been made about where I serve. These biographical aspects of my life are rooted as well in my spiritual dimension. Now as an executive secretary in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, I am responsible for oversight of working with 140,000 members, 500 pastors and many schools. Today, I see the pain, difficulty and loneliness of pastors who are reassigned to leadership in other churches. I also see the uneasiness and sometimes disappointment – with all that this entails – in the members of churches. I believe that something should be done about this.

In 2008, I was elected Franco-Haitian ministries coordinator for the Northeastern Conference. In that capacity, I was responsible for the supervision, spiritual leadership and coordination of the ministry in forty-three churches with twenty-three pastors. My responsibilities included the introduction and installation of new pastors in new churches.

Several times, my task was to encourage churches to accept pastors that they did not want. Other times, I had to convince others to keep pastors they wanted to get rid of. It was also part of my duty to prepare pastors to go to churches that they were not happy to serve. The manner in which a pastoral family comes and leaves a congregation correlates to the level and intensity of pain and joy in the process. I experienced personally how greatly blessed or profoundly painful this process can be for everyone involved.

In 2011, I was elected Vice President of the Atlantic Union Conference, the Northeast Headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which includes six Conferences, one college, 541 churches, seventy-three schools, over 1000 Gospel workers and 114,000 members. I was also the director of Haitian Ministries, African Ministries, Prison Ministries, Community Services and the Assistant Ministerial Director. During election seasons, as a pastor I dealt with local church leaders who either wanted a position that they did not get or were nominated for positions they did not want. Each election came with the privilege and dread for me to be both comforter in chief for some and convincer in chief for others. Elections create losers and winners. I often try to create win-win situations rather than win-lose outcomes. On June 19, 2016, I was elected Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Union Conference.

This doctor of ministry project comes from a heart experienced in pastoral transitions with many valleys walked and more mountains to climb. The seasons of blessed opportunities, joy, happiness and satisfaction in life exceeded by far the preordained moments of trials, sadness, and disappointment. The downpours of uncountable numbers of people sent on my way to support, encourage, love and care for me have immensely surpassed and engulfed the sprinkles of individuals who intended to

harm and discourage me. Indeed, the times and elements of trials and distresses were needed to keep my showers of blessing from turning into destructive storms of pride, arrogance and complaisance. Each chapter in this doctoral thesis plays an important role in the understanding of the model of transition for both pastors and churches.

Chapter one explains the ministry focus where I experienced pastoral transition in a ministerial “do or die” context. The Philadelphie church continues to be a reference point to and from much of my ministry. Besides my experience in pastoral transition as a child, I went through the most difficult leadership transition in that ministry context as an adult.

Chapter two deals with the biblical foundation texts. The Old Testament text, Deuteronomy 31:7-8, recounts the transition from Moses to Joshua. It provides the components of the transition model. This chapter will show that several aspects of the Moses-to-Joshua transition are still necessary today for smooth and effective pastoral transition and leadership. The New Testament text, John 21:15-17, helps us to see a transition prepared, planned and executed by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Chapter three focuses on the historical foundation. Throughout the history of Christianity, many pastoral leaders have experienced smooth transitions while others have gone through very miserable transitions. A. G. Daniells exemplifies good transitions from the vantage points of both incoming and outgoing leaders.

Chapter four highlights leadership transitions through theological (lenses) foundation that speaks to pastoral leadership and church administration in regards to periods of transitions for pastors and churches. Chapter five addresses the theoretical

component of pastoral-church transitions from the viewpoint of the disciplines of social sciences.

Chapter six highlights the implementation of the project while acknowledging stakeholders who gave guidance and support such as professional and context associates. It will also show the collection and analysis of data of surveys as well as the outcome of the data. It will conclude with my overall summary of learning and give some insight into the joys and disappointments of the project as well as how it can be replicated.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

It has been said that no one is an island and nothing happens by chance. A review of life from my earliest memories to my present context in ministry reveals that God has been at work in my life and has prepared me for every major life event. King David wrote a long time ago that “the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way” (Psalms 37:23, NKJV).. From early childhood through my formative years, my experiences and circumstances, both good and bad, have made me who I am and have prepared me for ministry up to this moment of my life.

This paper will review some of the issues in the Philadelphie church in Malden, Massachusetts. I will discuss several of the pertinent needs of the congregation and significant issues as they relate to pastoral transition and how they affect the church. I will also discuss some of my experiences and skills learned. Finally, I will conclude with a description of the issues of the Philadelphie congregation and other such congregations and show how they converge to form the basis of a proposed doctor of ministry project. I will specifically review the processes and experiences of pastoral transition in the Malden congregation compared with my own experiences of transition as a pastor and church member. Lastly, I will describe the general nature and possible content of the proposed project along with some of what I hope to learn through the doctoral project.

Context

In order to understand the needs of the Philadelphie congregation, one has to understand both the culture and the theologies, both explicit and implicit, of this congregation against the backdrop of its general faith tradition. As Robert J. Schreiter explains, “The explicit theologies are generally easy to find. They are present in the official doctrines, creeds and the confessions a congregation subscribes to. . .”¹ “Implicit theologies are theologies or fragment of theologies that inform the congregation’s life but are not necessarily acknowledged or overtly expressed.”² I have found this to be the case in the Philadelphie congregation and others like it. I will argue that when it comes to the relationship of the church with the pastor, the implicit theologies are by far more influential than the explicit ones.

The average tenure of a pastor in the Philadelphie congregation has been 3.9 years. Many members continue to regularly pray for some former pastors, yet they hardly remember the name of other pastors. All the pastors were welcomed. Some of the pastors were engaged in building long-term relationships while others have simply performed the expected responsibilities and waited for their transfer out to the next congregation. Some pastors are regularly invited back to preach and perform weddings and preach at funerals, while others are never invited back. The study of the context has shown that the long-term effect of the pastor-church relationship, while influenced by the pastor’s preaching abilities, has less to do with pastoral talents and abilities and more to do with attitudes

¹ Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 31.

² Ammerman, et al., *Studying Congregations*, 31.

and relationship building capabilities. It seems that this may also be the case when it comes to the long-term impact of ministers on the life and psyche of the congregation. While lasting influences are affected by the number of years the pastor stays with the congregation, the most impacting element may well be the type of relationships that the minister built or destroyed during his or her years as a spiritual leader. Another stunning fact has to do with the enforcement of policies and chairing committees. Some pastors spend a significant amount of their time enforcing policies and presiding over committee meetings. I have discovered that with the exception of rare dramatically negative committee sessions and policy enforcement, the church members generally do not remember a pastor for what happened in committees and policies enforced.

The organizational system of the Seventh-day Adventist church, of which the Philadelphia church is a part, calls for the conference executive committee, upon the recommendation of the conference administrators, to appoint the pastor of the local church. In some conferences, the administrators in practice will consult with the local church leadership and allow the local church to interview the prospective pastor(s) and vote whether or not they want the pastor. This is also a practice in other denominations where the congregation interviews the pastoral candidates and votes for or against a particular pastoral candidate. The relationship between the pastor and the congregation is definitely impacted by the process of selection.

The Needs of the Congregation

Congregations are significantly influenced by their pastors. The needs of the congregation, especially as they relate to pastoral transitions, are affected by the process

of appointment long before the minister begins her or his ministry. The conference committee, personnel department, search committee, or wherever the process begins, everyone involved needs to be intentional in finding the minister with the right set of skills for a particular congregation. A successful transition begins with a successful selection process, and a good selection will enhance pastoral ministry in the church and facilitate a successful transition for all parties involved. For the Philadelphia Church, the process begins with the Northeastern Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I will therefore refer to the conference, but in others denominations it could be bishop, the district leader, the search committee, the personnel committee or whatever specific name the committee may be called. I will sub-divide the needs into three categories: the conference, the pastor and the church.

The Conference

The conference administration needs to have a very transparent process when it is time to reassign a pastor. While every pastor should prepare the church for successful ministry after them, the transition process is initiated neither by the pastor nor the church but by the conference administration. The administrators will be wise to consult with the congregation before the start of the transition process. Since every pastor is different and every congregation has differing needs, the committee needs to seriously weigh in the need of the congregation, review the potential candidates, and appoint a pastor endowed with the skillset needed in a particular congregation. It is also imperative to understand the culture of a particular congregation because for every type of pastor there is a type of church. It is more beneficial to assign a pastor to his or her type of church. Furthermore,

when it is time for reassignment, the conference leaders may want to remember that certain pastors are like James and John who do well with long term tenures of eight years or more in one district. Others, by character, are like Paul. They will excel in short term missionary journeys. Last but not least, the conference should make it mandatory for the departing/retiring pastor to have a series of transitional meetings with his or her successor.

The Pastor

One of the great needs of the Philadelphia congregation is continuity. The incoming pastors should understand and appreciate the fact that the congregation existed before him or her. The church has a thirty-nine-year history and will be in existence long after he or she leaves. It is essential for the new leader to develop a love for continuity in the life of the church and not to undo the accomplishments of predecessors. Rather, he or she will do well to genuinely and openly show appreciation for what the predecessors have accomplished. Though few church members will most certainly compare the pastor to other pastors, the incoming spiritual leader should not compare himself or herself, explicitly or implicitly, with a predecessor. It never pays to criticize his or her predecessor. In fact, some would argue that it is unethical and unchristian.

Even if the pastor is going to be in a particular congregation for forty years, he or she needs to prepare the church for the time of his or her departure. Prepare a good succession and at the same time plan to be there as long as possible. The congregation and community need the pastor to spend more time building relationships with the people than he or she spends in committee meetings. It is important to be present in birthday

parties, anniversaries, graduations, social events, and yard sales. It is also important to be among the first in the hospital or in the house of grief when there is a death in a family of the church. Remember that Jesus had only three years with the disciples and had a lasting impact. The Lord invested Himself into his disciples and those He chose to carry on with the mission long after His death. All pastors need to invest themselves into the grooming, training and empowering of their local church leaders. An analysis of the days and ministry of Christ on earth reveals that He spent little time in committees and policy enforcement. However, Christ invested lots of time in relationship building, in caring for the people and training future leaders like Peter, James and John. In order to stay focused on what is most needed, the pastor should often ask herself or himself the question: Is this for me and my ego, or will it be seen as good for the congregation fifteen years after I have retired?

The Congregation

The Philadelphie congregation has been blessed with great talents and gifted pastors and local leaders. Unfortunately, many of the programs have been discontinued by succeeding administrations. As a result, the congregation is too often starting and restarting instead of building on foundations that have already been laid. It is a fact that pastors will come and go; local leaders will move away, but the congregation needs to be assured continuity. The process of electing local officers have often damaged the members' interpersonal relationships. For the sake of church unity, every officer and member needs to be comfortable with the process. Whether it is the election of officers or the assignment of pastors, people need to feel that the processes are transparent and fair

to all. The congregation also should endeavor to appreciate each pastor for who he or she is and accept that each pastor is different with a unique set of talents. The church members must resist the temptation to compare pastors. They are not indispensable; their individualism, talent, personality and ministry are distinct and irreplaceable.

My own heart was broken by a very painful pastoral transition that I experienced when I was just a five or six years old. I can identify several pastors whose relationships with colleagues were affected negatively after transitions of moving to or away from a congregation. At the same time, I have friends in several denominations who have experienced very successful transitions. I have learned through it all that intentionality and transparency in the process itself are more powerful than the identity of the pastor or the composition of the congregation. When everyone involved is intentional, deliberate and determined to have a smooth transition, it has a definitely positive impact on the collective spiritual and physical health of the congregation and the pastoral family. With deliberate intentionality, the worse possible match can be turned into unimaginable ministry success and succession.

I have experienced pastoral transitions from all the vantage points. I have been subjected to changeovers in pastoral appointments as a church member in childhood and adulthood. As a pastor, I have been assigned to pastorates of both large and small congregations. I have also seen it from the stand point of an administrator with the responsibility to assign and introduce pastors to congregations. Through it all, I have learned that the effectiveness or peril of pastoral transitions depends greatly on the point in time of the pastor's stage of professional and personal development and the degree of the socio-spiritual maturity of the congregation. Every experienced pastor who has

ministered in several churches has one particular church that is deeply more meaningful and dearest to his or her heart. Every congregation that has a history with multiple pastors has a favorite pastor. This fact has less to do with the pastor's talents and more to do with what is happening in the lives of both the pastor and the congregation at the given time of service. This unique pastor-church connection happens when the deep-in-the-soul needs of the pastor meet, fulfil and satisfy the profoundly felt needs of the congregation. This mutually complementing and fulfilling needs encounter between a congregation and a pastor is not something that can be duplicated by others regardless of how talented they may be. One pastor may be the beloved favorite pastor of a particular congregation at a particular point in time, and at the same time, he or she may be unwelcomed and undesired in another congregation. Likewise, a congregation may love a pastor who deep in his soul prefers to be in another congregation at a particular point of his or her professional development. A good relationship between pastor and congregation can be very rewarding with long-lasting benefits. One of my best friends is a son of a spiritual leader of my childhood church. More than forty years ago, we became friends when his father was my pastor for about three years. The truth is that there were other ministers, whose names I do not even remember, that served our church after my friend's father. In all cases, what is still vivid in my memory is not their administrative talents and skillful preaching. Rather, it is the relationship or the lack thereof, with me and with my parents. My experiences with pastoral transitions from childhood to professional adulthood converge with the needs of the Philadelphie congregation, which is typical of other congregations, to form the basis of my proposed project.

Ministry Journey

I was born at a time and in a place where particles of expectant optimism and mistrust filled the air at the same time. Expressions of great joy and inexpressible fear flowed from the same veins. Intellectuals and thinkers could not express their real thoughts because they never knew who was a spy with a grudge. The only safeguard was to stay out of politics, to not express to any one personal opinions, and outwardly pretend that all was well and sing the praises of “his excellency.”.

It was during this time of conflicting great joy and fear, faith and doubt, on Sunday April 12, 1959, Emmanuel Omeler at the age of thirty-nine and Lunie Meus who was nineteen years old, entered into holy matrimony in a packed little church. The wedding was reflective of the psyche of the community. Within a year of the wedding, the first child of their union was born whom they named Amos. The new couple and baby Amos were visiting Lunie’s ailing father during a fateful discussion. Familus was dying and part of the family wanted to take him by boat to the hospital that was sixty kilometers away. Others wanted to let him die in peace in the comfort of his home. Familus was happy to see his new grandson. He asked Lunie to let him hold baby Amos. Agony and hope pooled in the same heart and radiated on his face. He was happy to see his new grandchild but pained to know that he would not live to see him grow. He was conscious of the fact that he was dying. In the middle of the family discussion, Emmanuel suggested that they “pray and ask God for guidance”. Everyone agreed because they did not want Familus to die in a little boat on their way to the hospital which was sixty kilometers away. Two adults and one child were designated to pray. Before the prayers started, Familus signaled for someone to take Amos from his arms. He breathed his last

breath while they were still praying. The manner of his death had dual impact. It sealed into the mind of the people the power of prayer and at the same time it established Emmanuel as an emerging leader in spiritual matters. At the death of Familus, once again, faith and doubt, pain and joy intermingled under the same roof. They were grieving the death of Familus; at the same time, they were happy that this man, who was previously a powerful devil worshiper, had given his life to Jesus and died during a prayer session. Soon after her father's death, Lunie discovered that she was pregnant with her second child. That was me.

I was born prematurely on May 6, 1962. My parents were participants in a church lay leaders' convention in Jeremie, forty miles from their hometown. On Saturday while in a meeting, my mother went into labor, and during the night I was born. My father told me that he was not allowed in the delivery room. He stayed in an adjacent room where he heard all the groaning, including the very loud cry of pain and deliverance. When he heard that cry, happiness and sorrow crowded his soul. He was so sad to hear the painful noise; and yet so happy to know that the new baby was safely delivered. They did not have a name because they were not ready for me yet. Two prominent pastors were conducting the convention. One was a great intellectual and prominent preacher called Jose Brutus and the other a very distinguished mulatto pastor named Torchon. One preacher wanted to name me Elie and the other insisted that I should be called Pierre. My father settled the dispute by calling me Pierre Elie³.

³ Elie is the French for Elijah and Pierre is French for Peter. One wanted to name the baby boy after the Prophet Elijah and the other wanted to name him after Apostle Peter.

During my childhood, prayer was mandatory three times a day in the Omeler home. In the morning before everything else, at the sound of the bell at noon, and in the evening, everyone, parents, workers and servants, gathered for prayer. The household became accustomed to the three seasons of prayer. That was normal life; we had no problem with it. To go to church, do well in school, and work hard were the three doctrines drilled constantly in our heads. There was no social life outside of church; in order to succeed, we had to stay in school and work hard for anything we wanted in life. Absolute respect was expected not only for the parents, but for any adult. The day always began with family devotion. The evening was about doing school homework. There was no electricity in the town. We did homework in the light of a small gas lamp set in the middle of the table.

Church Transitions: The Saddest Season

The saddest seasons of the church community were during pastoral transitions when the pastors or school principals were leaving. After we had gotten familiar with them as our leaders and part of our family, we had to say good bye. This was a traumatic time for the little church community. We had special goodbye parties for them and I hated that time. It really felt like a funeral. There was one particular principal's wife that I loved very much as a child. She gave me personal attention and was as kind to me as an angel. When the couple left, I was so hurt and cried so much that I could not even go in the church. I have never seen her since the day they left. I was an adult when I learned that she had gotten sick and died a few years after leaving our community. The adult

members of the church were often too preoccupied with their own grief to realize that the children too were hurting and grieving.

Transitions in My Ministry Journey

In December 1984, Pastor Jones⁴ invited me to work as assistant evangelist in a four weeks meeting for his church in the summer of 1985. He liked my work enough to invite me to return the following year to preach an evangelistic meeting in October 1986. With the exception of one home study course, I had completed my degree requirements for Oakwood College in the summer of 1986. We packed a long Hertz Penske truck and headed north to New York City. I drove the truck and Myra drove our two door Toyota Corolla.

Pastor Jones and the church membership recommended me to be hired as the assistant pastor of the church. It did not work out that way. God had other plans for me. Someone's relative went around Pastor Jones, and the conference voted to hire another man as his assistant. The conference did not consult with Jones and he was furious. The succession of the assistant pastor was poorly managed by the conference. It negatively impacted the church, the senior pastor, the incoming assistant pastor and all the families involved. The transition was so ill-timed that the conference introduced the new assistant pastor in the middle of a three-week revival meeting that I was preaching. The head deacon of the church, with the permission of the senior pastor, told me: "You are the one we want; Pastor Jones wants you too; so we are not going to let that other pastor come. We'll go protest to the conference." I told him emphatically, "If you are doing this for

⁴ Not his real name.

me, please don't. This is not the way to help me. Please do not protest, do not obstruct his coming. God must have another plan for me." Nine months later, we planted another church. Pastor Jones put me in charge of the other church, and the Conference voted to hire me. Though still under the supervision of the mother church, I was trusted with the full leadership of the new congregation. The path that ministry has taken me would have been very different if I had been hired a year earlier.

I found myself again at an intersection that mingled success with disappointment. The church started with thirty-two members; two years later we had 125 members. We were doing fine. We had a brand-new car and good credit but could not find a house to buy. At the same time, Myra was getting tired of commuting to Beth-Israel and raising three little children in a small cramped apartment. This was not our idea of good family living. Myra did not utter any complaints. She was very supportive of the ministry, but I knew she was stressed and not happy. One day after a very good day in church, I told her that I was going to ask the Conference to send me to the seminary to study for my Master of Divinity degree. She gave me the biggest and tightest hug ever. The Conference president agreed. I left the church in July 1989 to go to work on my Master of Divinity degree at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Myra decided to stay home and homeschool the children. I was in school full time during the day and working the night shift as a security guard for Campus Safety. I chose the gatehouse night shift because I could study and do homework. In November 1991, I completed all the degree requirements with honors and returned to New York City for my next assignment.

Appointments and Transitions - 1991-1998

It was a Friday, December 13, 1991, when Myra and I packed the children into our blue Toyota Camry. We left the hotel in Queens, New York, and headed north to Massachusetts for the first time. It was raining that day and we did not know what was awaiting us. After staying in the hotel for two weeks waiting for an assignment, I was anxious to begin ministry. I learned so much in the seminary and felt that I could take on any problem in any church. I was ready to “change the world.” I remember looking at our three little children sleeping in the back seat fully trusting and thinking about how they were going to enjoy the church. I wanted them to go to a church where they would be happy, have friends and enjoy going to church. Just like Abraham, I left Michigan not knowing where I was going. I was literally in a pastoral transition without a destination. Two weeks later, I found myself in Massachusetts with my family again, with no idea where I was going to stay. Myra and I started reading the papers looking for a decent apartment. We kept looking and looking for an apartment and did not find anything to our satisfaction. We called a fellow minister and he arranged for us to stay in a temporary apartment in Norwood, Massachusetts.

I was installed as the senior pastor of the Philadelphie congregation on December 21, 1991. I was parachuted into a war theater where the battles were fought in the name of the Lord, but in reality they were conflicts of power struggles between two generations of church leaders. The congregation had recently purchased a beautiful temple but they did not have enough room for offices. They were fiercely divided over office spaces and positions. Several friends and a cousin begged me to ask the conference to rescind my assignment because the situation was too messy. My undaunted optimism and faith did

not allow me to make such request. As Dr. Proctor puts it: “it is a habit of the heart that constrained us to focus on the stars rather than the canopy of darkness”.⁵ I did not want to offer to anyone the opportunity to change the assignment because there was no other church available for me to pastor at that time.

The situation was even more complicated by the fact that the elders had asked the Conference for a pastor who was ordained and experienced. I was young, not ordained, and inexperienced. However, my optimism was unshaken. About two days before I was installed, my supervisor detected that I was very enthusiastic about going to the church. He felt obligated to remind me that “all that glitters are not gold”. It seemed that everyone expected me to fail there during that transition, but the word failure was never part of my thinking.

This church was going to make or break my ministry. It seemed that almost everyone expected failure. My first order of business was to meet with the church board. The congregation was divided but the board was still dominated by the one side. My supervisor advised me to ask the church to maintain every officer in their position for another year. That advice seemed good to me. When he first introduced me to the church board, the room was tense like a pressure cooker. Four of the younger members vehemently opposed the idea, but the majority approved and voted to present the idea to the church. I decided, however, that I would present the idea during a business session after the church service. I wanted to be introduced and preach first before getting into any controversy. During my first sermon, I observed that the most appreciated part of the

⁵ Samuel Dewitt Proctor, *The Substance of Thing Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press 1999), xxii.

message was the statement, “I did not come to work with one group or part of the church; I have come to be the pastor of the whole church.” I was taken aback by the strong affirmation of that phrase. It revealed to me what was their greatest fear. The members’ reaction told me that they appreciated my first sermon, and I felt that a little air was released from the pressure cooker.

The next day, Sunday December 22, 1991, I received a very sad call from my sister who was living in Port-au-Prince Haiti. She told me that my father, who returned to Haiti a few weeks earlier, had died. He was giving a Bible study to a gentleman when all of a sudden he started to cry aloud, “Jesus is coming soon, Jesus is coming soon!” He continued with that chant in an ascending and intensifying manner until he fell and died on the spot. She proceeded to tell me that the previous day, Saturday December 21, “Father tried to call you over ten times but could not find you.” I believe that he had an impression of his impending death and wanted to tell me something before he died.

Within three days, I was on my way to Haiti for the funeral. I returned a few days after the funeral and met with the nominating committee on Friday, January 3, 1992 at 7pm. The following day, I preached on the need to be united and had a circle around the church asking the people to move forward with the Lord. I followed up with a prayer of consecration asking God to seal everyone’s decision to work together for the good of the community. God indeed works in mysterious ways. The terrible division of the church coupled with the death of my father at that time, served as a catalyst to eight years of productive ministry and lasting friendship. This church shaped my ministry more than any other. Most of the members who wanted to make leadership changes were fighting perceived oppressive ecclesiastical abuse of power. I generally sympathize with the

oppressed. I do not like bullies. I resist bullying in fact. Most of the suppressed leaders were my cohorts. We had children around the same age range. We spent countless hours of fellowship while our children were playing together. They wanted the freedom to minister, and I needed an army of the willing to work with me. They were resisting spiritual dictatorial rules, and I loved democratic rules.

In 1996, I felt that I had reached full potential with the church and needed something new, lest we plateaued and declined. I prayed for something new and God gave me the vision for the 40 days of prayer ministry. It took a whole year to plan. The church family at large was very supportive of the idea, but others laughed at it. I confidently announced that the church doors would be opened for 40 days nonstop with prayer meetings every morning, noonday and evening. Many prophesied again that I was doomed to fail. My own conference president called me in his office to caution me not to move forward with a program that was unsustainable. When he saw my elaborate planning and determination, he concluded: "I do not think it will work but you sound like you know what you are doing. So go right ahead." God bless his soul!

In December 1998, I was transferred to the Temple Salem Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Dorchester, Massachusetts that had 800 members. That process of transition was a pipe from which flowed both joy and distress. It was a bitter-sweet experience for the church family, for the departing pastoral family and the incoming pastoral family. I did my best to prepare the church that I was leaving to welcome the incoming pastor. The members of the Philadelphia church organized a great send off for my family. They prepared a heartfelt, tearful farewell banquet for my family and were very generous. They even named the fellowship hall after me. However, many have yet to recover from that

transition. For several years, many of the youth refused to accept the new leadership because they were still mourning my departure. The situation was traumatizing and seemed unfair to everyone. Often, these pastoral transitions permanently wound parishioners. Some, still grieving, are not ready to accept the new pastoral leadership. Others, who were not in favor with the former pastor, exploit the situation for their own selfish gain, to the detriment of the new leader. I know several colleagues who succeeded one another and their friendship suffered setbacks as a result of pastoral successions.

My ministry in Temple Salem started in January 1999. I experienced the complexities of pastoral transitions with a couple of leaders who were still grieving the departure of my predecessor. At the same time, others who celebrated his departure demonstrated great determination to influence my decisions in their favor.

In 2004, I was asked to pastor the Horeb SDA Church in Brooklyn, New York. It was a repeat of a harrowing congregational transition. The congregation had been in a state of division and spiritual paralysis for years. Through intense hard labor, constant prayer and a strong commitment to inclusiveness, the church was reunited and the people were brought back together. I believe that the identification, recruitment and intentional training of new disciples and leaders remain important parts of the pastor's mission. I was successful in recruiting new leaders, but I also failed to change many hearts. Horeb SDA Church deeply challenged my calling and taught me to fully depend on God's leading in every detail of ministry.

It is through my personal life experiences, ministry tract and its experience and professional development that I have both experienced and observed the pain and disconnect that come about through transitions (changes in pastoral leadership) in local

congregations. Both the incoming pastor and the congregation can experience painful situations and distrustful relationships. Having experienced this throughout my ministry and being in a position that is a part of assigning ministers and working with churches, I feel that I can use my professional development and present ministry context to address this subject in a doctoral thesis and ministry project.

Synergy Development

Overview of the Project

The members and officers of the Philadelphia SDA Church in Malden, Massachusetts, will be the primary participants of the project. They will constitute the main focus of the study. They will be asked about their experiences including their hopes and fears when it comes to pastoral transition. In addition, our professional associates will be surveyed. I will interview three current and former conference presidents or vice presidents on their leadership transition experiences as references to this project. They will be asked questions relating to pastoral transition. I will also conduct four workshops on transition for pastors and local church leaders. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the constitutions at different levels of the organization call for the presidents of Conferences, Unions, Divisions and the General Conference to be ordained ministers. Presidents at all levels of the church are pastors. Therefore, I will use the term pastoral leadership transition to include both pastoral transfers from one local church to another and leadership transition when one Conference, Union, Division and General Conference president is elected to succeed another. It is true that leadership transition often involves

more than the president. Sometimes all three top officers are reassigned. The focus of the surveys however, will be transition between top leaders.

I will conduct four workshops with pastors and other leaders during pastors' meetings to present the proposed model for pastoral leadership transition and then analyze all the data and the effectiveness of the model after it has been implemented.

One of my professional associates is a conference president whose contribution will be essential. He will schedule pastors' meetings during which I will present the model and survey the pastors. This will certainly generate a greater response to the survey questions and allows me to receive first hand reactions to the proposed model. Pastors will be able to comment on the proposed model. They will also opine on the merit, the practicality and viability of the transition model. The conference presidents will also be in the position to facilitate implementation of the model since they are primarily responsible to initiate transfers of pastors, bring the proposed transfers to the executive committee and plan the installation of the pastors.

The Union president will bring a different perspective to the research. Union presidents preside over nominations of conference presidents. During constituency meetings, whether or not there is a transfer of power at the conference administration level, it is the Union president who is the facilitator and chair of the conference nominating committee. The Union president oversees transfer of power at the conference level. The conference president generally oversees the transition of pastoral leadership at the local church level. The church pastor oversees the transition and succession of officers and department directors at the local church level. It is often the constituency or

an officer of a higher level who initiates the transition. Survey questions will be given to the pastors to illicit their response.

Conclusion

Pastoral leadership transition is inevitable because as human beings we are feeble, corruptible, and mortal beings. Regardless of the number of years spent with a congregation, it is incumbent upon the pastor, the congregation, and the conference to assure a smooth transition. This project will study the process of leadership transitions in the Old and New Testaments. Considering pastoral changes/transitions, this project will explore the following:

- What was the process?
- Who initiated the transition?
- What actions were taken to assure smooth transitions?
- What issues did predecessors and successors face in the Bible?
- How relevant are these issues today?
- How can the biblical transitions of spiritual leadership serve as a basis for pastoral transition in the 21st century?

The project will also analyze how Jesus prepared his disciples, the twelve apostles and Peter especially for leadership transition. What did he spend most of his time doing during his three-and-a-half year of public ministry? How did Christ prepare his leadership team and His successors? When did Christ begin to announce his departure and what key elements of successful transitions do we find in his final message? We will also study the

transition of power from Moses to Joshua in Deuteronomy 31, and extract from there the components of the proposed model.

Once the biblical foundations are established, the project will correlate the basis with the process and consequences of pastoral transitions in the Philadelphia church in particular, and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and some other denominations in general. I will develop a research instrument to investigate the effect and consequences of good and bad spiritual leadership transitions. Since pastoral transitions may often be a time of grief and even trauma for many, especially for the children of the congregation including the children of the pastor, I will also analyze how children grieve during transitional periods. I will seek to learn the long-term consequences of transitions and discover possible solutions to the problems that are inherent to changes.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The Old Testament contains many passages that could be used for the Biblical foundation of this model for smooth and effective pastoral leadership transition. In the days of Samuel, we find the people's request for a new king. The Israelites were conflicted by their love and appreciation for Samuel and their desire for a new king that would lead them "like other nations" (I Sam 8:6, NIV). From that point on, there had been a long history of succession of kings, priests and prophet throughout the Old Testament. Some of the most notable successions of kings and religious leaders included the passage of leadership from Saul to David, from David to Solomon, from Solomon to Jeroboam and Rehoboam, from Elijah to Elisha and from Moses to Joshua. Some successions were initiated by God, well planned and implemented. Others resulted from rebellion within the ranks of officials or the people. Many transitions (changes of kings) stemmed from the death of sitting leaders. In all cases, leadership transition often comes with challenges that can threaten the continuity of progress or the survival of the affected community. The Moses to Joshua pastoral leadership transition process is a foundational biblical model for leadership transitions of all times. The changeover was initiated by God and involved the active participation of the departing leader, the incoming leader and the people. One can extract from the text a clear model for pastoral leadership transition.

The history of interpretation of the book of Deuteronomy is very exhaustive. The position of Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Torah and the identification of its author have generated continual discourses among scholars. The book's relevance is punctuated by the fact that it is the last book of Moses; it contains the last words of Moses who holds an unparalleled position in the history and in the heart of the people of Israel from the day of the burning bush until today. Deuteronomy records the final instructions and predictions of the great leader.

One aspect of the book, which has received little attention, is the fact that it includes a model for pastoral leadership transition. Moses dominated the life of Israel so much that his death could have been an existential threat for the nation. Not only was survival at stake for the Israelites but also the very credibility of Yahweh was at stake. The promises made to the people through Abraham, Moses and others had not yet been fulfilled. Many years had come and gone and they had not received the Promised Land, and the death of Moses could mean the end of that quest. After forty years in the wilderness, the deaths of their original leaders and now the approaching death of their most prominent leader could be disastrous. The people had reasons to be afraid, uncertain and fearful. Hence, there was purpose in the repeated admonition: "be courageous and do not be afraid." Continuity and survival of the nation depended on a good leadership transition and succession. God's honor was at stake and so was Moses' lifelong mission and his ability to see beyond himself to prepare a succession. Many congregations and communities often face such uncertain future. Pastoral leadership transition is often neglected and unplanned. Countless members, parishioners and their families have been hurt and some have lost their faith due to the loss or transfer of a beloved pastor. The

consequences are often bitterness, disaster, division, depression, discontinuity, unaccomplished goals, unfulfilled mission and in some cases the demise of congregations.

Deuteronomy provides solid foundations for modeled transition. I have chosen Chapter 31:7-8 and John 21:15-17, respectively, as Old Testament and New Testament biblical foundations for this research because they receive little attention in the biblical literature relating to pastoral transition. Most commentators and writers barely mention the leadership transition and often do so while addressing the song of Moses. This is emblematic when it comes to pastoral transition. I believe the Song of Moses, as part of chapters 31-34, is a part of the implementation of the transition of leadership. The main focus of these chapters is not the Song of Moses. Rather, the Song of Moses is part of the final message of a model transfer of power. This was essential to the survival of the Israelites and the vindication of the power of God to keep His promises. It is also a challenge to every responsible leader and pastor to assure the continuity of their mission and the fulfillment of God's promises to a community or congregation. Moses "becomes the symbol for an unfulfilled hope to live in the Promised Land."¹ Thus, an intentional and orderly transition is necessary to assure continuity of purpose and hope.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the importance of intentional pastoral leadership in the context of transition and succession planning. We will do so by studying Deuteronomy 31:7-8 and the Moses to Joshua transition of power. We will review the many subtle ways that the transition was prepared and established considering these

¹ John Barton and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001), 139.

verses as the biblical foundations for this project. The length and purpose of this paper will not allow time to fully review and discuss the literary disagreements and other issues around Deuteronomy, its literary features and authorship. A lot has been written about the authorship and date of Deuteronomy 31. There are sections in the chapter that have prompted some scholars to state that the last four chapters were added at a later date. We will study the content, context and meaning of Deuteronomy 31:7-8 as it relates to leadership transition. What qualified Joshua to be a suitable successor to Moses? How did God prepare Joshua for the mission? How and when was Joshua introduced as the new leader? What was the role and attitude of Moses in the process of transition? We will attempt to answer these questions.

In the second part of this chapter we will study John 21:15-18 to see how Jesus himself prepared the community of believers, the apostles and disciples for His time of his departure by establishing Peter as the leading apostle. We will endeavor to show that our Lord Jesus very early on started to work on a succession plan. We will conclude with a review of our findings and demonstrate how these two passages are foundational to our anticipated project of a model for successful pastoral transition.

The Book of Deuteronomy and The Text

A close look of the book of Deuteronomy through the lens of pastoral transition reveals that the transition was being prepared by God long before it was time for Moses to die. Joshua was clearly being groomed for leadership. He had proven himself to be a fearless effective leader. He was the leader in waiting. Joshua was the one chosen by Moses to lead the fight against the Amalekites. Moses gave the orders and “Joshua fought

the Amalekites². Joshua “overcame the Amalekites”³ and when the Lord ordered Moses to “write this on a scroll as something to be remembered,” Yahweh added: “Make sure that Joshua hears it.”⁴ Joshua is often called Moses’ aid (Ex 24:13, Num 11:28, Ex 33:11). He is with Moses on top of the Mountain of God (Ex 24:13). He is the fearless explorer of the land; and from the twelve explorers, Joshua is the only one along with Caleb who survived the forty years in the desert. Concerning the Promised Land, God announced to Moses “your assistant Joshua son of Nun will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it.”⁵ Joshua definitely had been trained and prepared to succeed Moses. Christian Okwori correctly wrote that “every leader must be able to build structures that would outlive them. Many churches, universities, companies, societies, religions and even nations are living dead if at all they still exist after the demise of their founders or progenitors. Building a structure that will outlive you is foresight. Success without succession is a failure in the waiting.”⁶

The book of Deuteronomy itself refers to Moses as its author. Chapter 1:1 clearly states “these are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel...” Deuteronomy is a narrative with other sermons and admonitions included. Our text in particular is a transitional address, a farewell discourse, and a call for both the people and Joshua the successor to be courageous. This appeal for fearlessness and courage is anchored in the fact that “the

² Unless otherwise noted, all bible quotations are from the New International Version of the Holy Bible®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1985, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. ® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide, Genesis 17:10.

³ Genesis 17:13.

⁴ Exodus 17:14.

⁵ Deuteronomy 1:38, 3:28.

⁶ Christian O. O. Okwori, *The Leader that You Are* (Dartford, UK: Xlibris Publishing, 2015), 2.

Lord will be with you.” In Deuteronomy 31:1-8, Moses activates the transition of leadership by announcing his impending death. He admonishes the people to be strong. Verses 7 and 8 are the last part of the introductory sentences where he publicly introduces Joshua as his successor. This is not the nomination of Joshua. The author of the book of Deuteronomy referred to this transfer of power several times before. We see it in Deuteronomy 1:38, “your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it.” Also in Deuteronomy 3:28, God said: “commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see.” Moses made it clear earlier that he wanted to continue on with the people to cross the Jordan, but God did not grant his request. Most pastors who have had successful tenures and wanted to stay longer in their congregation or leadership position can sympathize with Moses. Here is how he reports it: “At that time I pleaded with the Lord: ‘Sovereign Lord, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand...Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan...But because of you the Lord was angry with me and would not listen to me.’ ‘That is enough’, the Lord said. ‘Do not speak to me anymore about this matter.’”⁷

After receiving that final answer from the Lord, Moses submits to God’s will and proceeds with the transition plan as God instructed him to. Our text is part of the implementation of a leadership transition plan prepared and announced beforehand. Patrick Miller is correct in writing, “that transition is a significant theme of the book. It has already been signaled in 1:38 and 3:28, where Moses is commanded to charge and

⁷ Deuteronomy 3:23-26.

encourage Joshua. That is just what is done here at the end of the book, first by Moses and then by the Lord.”⁸

Outline and Structure of the Text

Deuteronomy 31:1-6 is an introduction to the main task of the day found in verses 7 and 8. Verse 3 reminds the audience that this is not the first time they had heard about Joshua succeeding Moses. “Joshua will go before you as the Lord has said.” They are told that God will be with them and will deliver to them the Promised Land before addressing Joshua. Then, the text reads,

Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, ‘Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.’⁹

There are eight important parts of the text that need emphasizing:

Verse. 7 begins with the adverb “then”

This is an indication that what follows is connected to the immediate preceding discourse. What preceded in verses 1 to 6 was Moses’s announcement of his death. He reminded the community that he is 120 years old. He wanted to cross the Jordan, but the Lord has said no. He reminded them of the promise of God to always be with them and introduces Joshua as the new leader. “The Lord your God himself will cross over ahead

⁸ Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 217.

⁹ Deuteronomy 31: 7-8.

of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua also will cross over ahead of you, as the Lord said.”¹⁰ He gave them a historical perspective to remind them of what God did to Sihon and Og the Amorites and reconfirm that even after his demise, God will continue to be with them if they continue to obey God’s commands. Moses concludes his introduction by asking the people as a whole to “be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”¹¹

Moses Summoned Joshua (Vs. 7).

Both the departing and succeeding leaders appear together. It is Moses himself who introduces the new leader to the people. Until this moment, Joshua was always behind the scene, a few steps behind Moses. Joshua was the aid who stayed behind and never left the tent while Moses spoke with God.¹² Moses is still the leader; he summons and invites Joshua who now comes to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with him. Researchers have found that at the time of transfer of power in the presence of the people, “Moses acted as a servant to Joshua, the roles being exchanged.”¹³ T. Francis Glasson wrote that there may have been a basin of water for Moses to wash the feet of Joshua as Jesus washed the feet of the disciples in His Farewell Discourse. Whether or not Moses washed Joshua’s feet, whether or not Moses gave his robe to Joshua as others have said, Glasson

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 31:3.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 31:6.

¹² Exodus 33:11.

¹³ T. Francis Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (Naperville, IL: SCM Press, LTD, 1963), 82.

concludes: “that there is ample evidence for the stories about Moses serving Joshua.”¹⁴

Moses at the time of handing over his authority to Joshua served him. This is not stated in the Old Testament, but it is well authenticated in later traditions.¹⁵ The new leader is invited and introduced but has nothing to say at this point. There is one leader at a time. Moses is still calling the shots. His purpose at this point is to support and uplift the hand of the incoming leader and to encourage the people to do the same.

In the Presence of all Israel (Vs. 7)

The phrase, “in the presence of all Israel (vs 7),” is important in that it speaks to a public transfer of power. The appearance of the sitting pastor together with the successor in the presence of all the people is a definite show of unity and fosters continuity. The public demonstration of unity of purpose helps to comfort those who are grieving the loss of the leader and facilitates their acceptance of the new leader. Moses left no doubt that he wholeheartedly supported Joshua and he did it publicly and not in a meeting of the board of trustees only, nor the board of elders behind closed doors, but in the presence of all the people.

Be strong and courageous (Vs. 7).

The same admonition to the people is now directed to the new leader. This recurring refrain, “be strong and courageous,” reveals Moses’ utmost concern that the people could lose strength and get discouraged and depressed during the transition

¹⁴ Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*, 82.

¹⁵ Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*, 85.

period. This is why it is extremely important for the departing leader to do his or her part in encouraging the church or organization at the time of his or her departure.

You must go with the people into the land (Vs. 7).

Here, Moses openly brings to Joshua's attention the aspiration of the people. The realization of their hopes and dreams becomes the new leader's mission. A wise incoming leader will diligently seek to learn about the dreams and aspirations of the congregation. She or he will learn of the vision and mission statement of the congregation or organization. Leading the people into the Promised Land is his mission and not reaching this goal would be a catastrophic failure. That is why they needed to be courageous because there were many more battles to fight before reaching that goal. Though reaching the Promised Land is their utmost dream and hope, that will be just the beginning. The division of the land will be an awesome task for the new leader. Moses tells Joshua that this awesome responsibility will be his to accomplish.

The Lord himself will go before you (Vs. 8).

It is important for the new younger leader to follow the leading of the Lord. God will go before him to prepare the way and secure the inheritance for the people. Leadership can be lonely at times. Leaders may often feel alone. The assurance of God's continual presence is vital.

He will never leave you (Vs. 8)

This prediction will later prove to be needed because Joshua will have to face some times in his leadership where he'll be asking whether or not God is with him. Sometimes, the difficulties or defeats of the moment may cause a leader to feel alone and abandoned. God promises that He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Do not be afraid of discouraged (Vs. 8)

The departing leader knows from personal experience that discouragement will be knocking at Joshua's door. We will show later that Moses here is telling Joshua do not break, do not give in, do not be dismayed. What follows the public leadership change over, though not part of our two foundation verses, is equally important aspects of the transition plan. Here is an outline of them:

- A. Verses 9-13. Moses speaks with the elders and priest and gives instruction for the future.
- B. Verse 14. God commands Moses and Joshua to appear together before Him.
- C. Verse 23. God addresses Joshua directly as the new leader to confirm what His servant Moses had said. God tells Joshua straightforwardly: "Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you."

God's meeting with Joshua and Moses ends with verse 23. Moses then takes time to write these laws. Then, he summons the "elders . . . officials of all your tribes," which suggests that the song and laws were sung or given to the "elders officials of all the tribes." The final act will again find both Moses and Joshua together in the presence of all

people. This is another demonstration that the incoming and departing leaders are united.

This seamless transition of leadership concludes with the following verses:

Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, 'Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.'¹⁶

Literary Conflict in the Text

The Israelites had been in the wilderness for over forty years. Moses was the only leader they had known. He was the final authority; he had the last word in everything; and now he was about to die. The Israelite community was swimming in a sea of despair. They did not know what would happen after Moses. Whether or not they would ever get into the Promised Land was their constant concern. Moses, the beloved leader, received clear direction from God that he was not going to lead the people into the Promised Land. "With Moses' departure, two matters need attention: Who will lead the people, and how will they continue to have the instruction of the Lord to guide them?"¹⁷

Many believe that Deuteronomy 31-34 is an editorial addition to the whole book of Deuteronomy. Some declare that it was an appendix while others think that it is a fitting epilogue. Others find inconsistencies and disconnectedness within these final four chapters. The fact that the first three chapters include much of what is said in the last four chapters is reason to investigate more. In particular, our text which relates the transition

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 32: 44-47.

¹⁷ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 217.

of power, the anointing of Joshua as Moses' successor, is also in Deuteronomy chapter 3. The subtle and obvious differences between the two passages merits consideration. But Brian Britt, in the article "Deuteronomy 31-32 as a Textual Memorial," sees harmony in the text dealing with two story lines namely, the death of Moses and the commission of Joshua and the Torah and Song of Moses. He offers this form:

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Narrative Strands</i>
1. 31:1-13	Death and Joshua -> Torah and Song
2. 31:14-22	Death and Joshua -> Torah and Song
3. 31:23-30	Song
4. 32:44-47	HARMONIZATION (Death and Joshua + Torah and Song)
5. 32:45-52	Torah and Song -> Death and Joshua ¹⁸

Weitzman argues that this narrative should be categorized as the "teaching of a dying sage" paralleled with the last words of Ahiqar. He sees four clear parallels between the two narratives. Two of them are quoted here:

The first motif, the imputation of the teaching to a dying sage, is perhaps the most recognizable of the four parallels. At the beginning of each narrative, the protagonist realizes that death is near, and appoints – or has appointed for him – a successor. Ahiqar, realizing that he is about to die and that he has no son, appoints his nephew Nadan as his son and successor. Death is revealed to him, and his successor is appointed for him by God – he, like Ahiqar, realizes that he is old and is to be replaced (Deut 31:14, 23).¹⁹

Throughout the narrative, we see this tension that is typical in pastoral leadership transitions. There is a pull between the loyalty of the community to the departing leader and their need to embrace and support the new leadership. The beloved departing leader

¹⁸ Brian Britt, "Deuteronomy 31-32 as a Textual Memorial." *Biblical Interpretation* 8 (2000): 358-374. accessed April 16, 2015. *Old Testament Abstracts*, EBSCOhost.

¹⁹ Steven Weitzman, "Lessons from the Dying: The Role of Deuteronomy 32 in Its Narrative Setting." *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994): 377-393. accessed April 16, 2015. *Old Testament Abstracts*, EBSCOhost.

must admonish the faithful against discontinuity and departure from the teaching and at the same time he must empower the successor and be careful not to diminish his authority. This narrative is clearly mindful of these issues by having Joshua present with Moses when he sings his song. The second of the four parallels found by Weitzman has to do with the transmission of the final teaching. As Jacob did in his final address to his sons in Genesis 49, Moses' final address has a prophetic portion. It looks beyond his contemporary audience and addresses future generations. Weitzman sees this similarity between Deuteronomy 31 and *Ahiqar*.

The fourth and most striking motif shared by Deuteronomy 31 and *Ahiqar* is the transmission of the final teaching in both written and oral form. Both Deuteronomy 31 and later versions of *Ahiqar* note that the sage issues his final teaching in two forms: in oral form to a contemporary audience and in written form to an audience at a spatial or temporal distance. According to Deuteronomy 31:22 and 30, Moses first writes the song down and then recites it in the ears of all the assembly of Israel.²⁰

Main Characters of the Text

יְהוָה “The Lord” : יְהוָה is the omnipresent character in the text. The “I am that I am” covenant keeping God is the one who appeared to Moses at the burning bush. He promised the land to the forefathers. The omnipresence of the Lord before, during and after this transition cannot be understated.

- Yahweh told Moses that He will not go into the land.
- Yahweh told Moses to view the Land but not to enter it.
- Yahweh told Moses to appoint Joshua.

²⁰ Weitzman, “Lessons from the Dying,” 386.

- Yahweh will go before the people.
- Yahweh will be with Joshua.
- Yahweh will be with the people.
- Yahweh will never leave nor forsake his people.

In the first eight verses of Deuteronomy 31, eight times do we find יהוה translated by “the Lord,” “Jehovah.” The name also occurs whenever the name Joshua appears in the text. יהוה is seen in every verse. Every other character is subservient to יהוה. They are merely instrumental personalities that will execute what יהוה is doing. They will go where the Lord has gone before them and possess what He has promised to their ancestors.

At this time of uncertainty and concern about the future, the Lord is still the ever-present source of comfort. With the passing of Moses, there will be a new leader name Joshua, but the people needed to know that “the Lord Himself will go before” them just as He did when Moses was alive. Pastors and leaders will come and go, but the Lord will always be there. Yahweh is their “refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble.”²¹

Moses

The second most present character is Moshe. His name appears twice. He is Yahweh’s mouthpiece. He had been the all-encompassing leader for over forty years, and now he appears limited. “I am no longer able to lead you.”²² “I cannot cross the Jordan.”

²¹ Psalm 46:1.

²² Deuteronomy 31:1.

Moses' role during this transfer of power is to encourage the people, to remind them to trust God and to empower and encourage Joshua his successor. As disappointed as he was with the fact that he was not going to enter Canaan, Moses did not concentrate on himself and his own displeasure. He focused on assuring a smooth transition.

Joshua

Joshua is present but has nothing to say at this point. He has been prepared for this moment. Moses is still the leader and God's spokesperson. Moses, though at the end of his life, is still very influential. There is one leader at a time. The departing sage is still Yahweh's main instrument. Joshua is appointed and commissioned by God, summoned and presented to the people by Moses, and anointed by Eliazar the priest.²³ He is the leader in waiting. It should be noted that after this public ceremony, Jehovah will have a private meeting with Moses and Joshua.²⁴ Both the departing and incoming leaders will receive instructions and encouragements from the Lord who is omnipresent and omnipotent.

All of Israel

The people were not involved in the appointment of Joshua. Nor were they involved in the appointment of Moses as their leader. It was all God's doing. God commanded Moses to train Joshua, to appoint him and have him anointed by the priest. God spoke with Moses and Joshua privately. The people were not involved in that

²³ See also Numbers 27:22-23.

²⁴ Deuteronomy 31:14-15.

meeting. However, the implementation of the succession takes place in the presence of “all of Israel.” The author of the book has taken pain to convey the message that this part of the succession is a ceremony taking place in the presence of all the people.

- Verse 1 - “Moses spoke these words to all Israel.”
- Verse 7 - Moses said these “in the sight of all Israel.”

Like Joshua, “all the people” have nothing to say at this point. This is a very difficult time for the people. This is a time of uncertainty, fear, disappointment and grief. They are mourning the fact that their beloved leader will soon leave them. At the same time, they are reassured that they will continue their march toward the Promised Land. This is a very challenging time for Moses as well because he wanted to cross over into the Promised Land with the people, but God has denied his request for entry. He would have loved to continue on to the Promised Land. Moses was grieving as well. In spite of Moshe’s initial desire to continue on, he did not simply make an announcement, but he went around to all of Israel.

Much has been said about the significance of Moses going around all Israel. I submit that Moses had multiple reasons for going around Israel. First, he wanted to say goodbye. Second, he needed to garner support and cooperation for the leadership of Joshua. Third, he wanted to encourage the people who faced uncertainties. Fourth, he needed to have a final tour and personal conversation with people. Patricia R. Robertson speaks of the need to say goodbye during the transition process. She recalls that during one of her transitions, it was important to take “time to personally explain to people my discernment was not only helpful, but I believe allowed people to affirm my decision

without feeling I had abandoned them. It also gave the staff time to adjust and begin to imagine a parish without my presence.”²⁵

As Moses went around to all Israel, he gave them instructions and encouragements. He introduced Joshua to them as their new leader and reminded them of the continual presence of Yahweh who will lead them. He will go and come before them. Joshua also will go and come before them. The people were witnesses to these things.

Key Terms: Word Search

Deuteronomy 31:1-8 is a public completion of the transition-of-leadership plan with a very obvious appeal to both Joshua and the people to be courageous. The key terms/phrases of these verses for the people and Joshua are: “be strong,” “be courageous,” “do not fear,” and “do not be dismayed.” Other expressions found in the text are:

- They “will inherit” the Land.
- As for “Yahweh,” He will “go with the people.”
- God “swears,” He will “be with you.”
- He will “not fail.”
- He will “not forsake you.”

When Moses began the implementation of the transition-of-leadership plan, he was not introducing a stranger to the people. In fact, the key words used in this transitional ceremony described the character of Joshua. He was a faithful, fearless, courageous, God-

²⁵ Patricia Robinson, “Being Made New: Experiencing the Gifts of Conscious Pastoral Transition” *Congregations* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 34-38. accessed October 6, 2016. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

fearing leader. The people still remembered Joshua as the explorer who spoke words of courageousness and bravery at a time of crisis in their lives. Following the report of the other ten spies, Moses had fallen facedown and the people were talking about choosing another leader to lead them back to Egypt. The situation was dire, but Joshua spoke up and said to all of Israel: “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.”²⁶

God in fact had been preparing Joshua for this very moment. He had been the trusted assistant of Moses and had proven his leadership skills. When Moses addressed Joshua in front of the people and admonished him *וְאַתָּה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ*, he was not asking Joshua to acquire something new; rather, he was rather acknowledging and affirming that Joshua was indeed a fearless and courageous man and encouraging him to continue to be who he is and not to *תִּשָּׁבַח* (break), be terrified or discouraged when faced with future difficulties. Ben Pugh rightly notes that “the transfer of the charisma from Moses to Joshua . . . is accompanied by unambiguous recognition. Fortunately, Joshua already had a battlefield success to his credit.”²⁷

The theology and message of these verses are, in my view, the undeniable omnipresence and the eternal character of God as one who keeps His word. Moses as a human had accomplished a lot, but he is temporal. He serves his tenure, but he too must

²⁶ Numbers 14:7-9 .

²⁷ Ben Pugh, “Succession Plans: Is There a Biblical Template?” *Journal of The European Pentecostal Theological Association* 36, no. 2 (September 2016): 117-130.

pass. Only God is eternal. As in other transitional contexts, God always prepares a successor as was done from Elijah to Elisha, from Saul to David and from David to Salomon and others. The Pulpit Commentary rightly conveys the state of mind of the people at the impending death of Moses.

It might have discouraged the people, the loss of their great leader, but he points them upward to the Lord their God, who had been the real Leader in the Exodus and pilgrimage, and who was going at their head across the Jordan. Their faith in the invisible leader is to be strengthened now that the visible and human leader is to be taken away from them. Besides they are to have Joshua as the captain of host.²⁸

These words of assurance must have been warmly welcomed by a people who now had to carry on by entering a strange land absent Moses, their leader.

Continuity and Protection from Unexpected Personal or Communal Crisis

Personal crisis is inevitable. A good transition plan will protect the church organization from sudden crises triggered by moral shortcomings, accidents, unexpected medical emergencies or even the sudden death of a sitting leader. God is never taken by surprise, and God's church needs to follow His leading when it comes to pastoral leadership transitions. The Old Testament has some examples of transitions as seen in the changing of leadership among kings and in some cases among prophets. When king Saul died in the battle on Mount Gilboa, it was a time of great grief for the community. It was also a very challenging and dangerous time for the young kingdom. 1 Samuel 31 very colorfully records the unspeakably calamitous time:

Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. And the Philistines overtook Saul

²⁸ H. D. M. Spense and Joseph S. Exell, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 490.

and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. The battle pressed hard against Saul, and the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, 'Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me.' But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore, Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together. And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled. And the Philistines came and lived in them.²⁹

The day of Saul and Jonathan's death was disastrous and terrible, but God had prepared the people for that day. The successor had been identified, anointed, prepared, trained and in waiting. David's lamentation over the death of Saul and his sons also expressed the magnitude of the situation.

Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places!
 How the mighty have fallen!
 Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon,
 lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the
 uncircumcised exult.
 You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you,
 nor fields of offerings! For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,
 the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.³⁰

The fact that David was the successor did not prevent him from fully and sincerely expressing his heartfelt deep sorrow for Saul, the leader. In spite of the injustices he suffered and murderous intentions of Saul towards him, David proved himself to be a suitable successor.

David also presents an example of true *love of enemies*, being not merely free from all *feeling* of revenge in the *heart*, making no complaint or accusation

²⁹ *The English Standard Version of the Holy Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Standard Bible Society, 2001), (1 Sa 31:1–7).

³⁰ *The English Standard Version of the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 2 Sa 1:19–21.

concerning the wrong done him, uttering no word of *joy* over the judgment that has befallen his enemy, but mourning his fall as that of a friend.³¹

David's primary concern was not himself but the honor of God and the wellbeing of the people.

How human and natural it would seem if he expressed satisfaction at Saul's end and its results for himself! Instead of this we see in David's words and conduct in the presence of this terrible catastrophe *the noblest and purest unselfishness*, and concern only for the sacred interests of Israel as the people of the Lord. Looking altogether away from himself and his royal calling, he immerses himself with his men in mourning for the national calamity.³²

Had God not prepared the successor, the Israelites would have been exposed to great danger and would have been at the mercy of their enemies who were not known to be merciful towards their enemies. The Philistines were actively seeking the destruction of Israel. The sudden death of the Israelite king and his sons in battle would have meant the end of the Israelites kingship and years of subjugation to their enemies.

Conclusion

God always has a succession plan in place. Yahweh is never caught unprepared. Long before Eli and his sons died, God had prepared Samuel to be Eli's successor. The people knew it as well. While Eli was still leading, it is said of Samuel that "all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD."³³ Eli knew it too, but that did not keep him from being a mentor to the leader in waiting. The man from Benjamin came to deliver to Eli the fateful news that "Israel has fled before the Philistines,

³¹ John Peter Lange, et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 1 & 2 Samuel* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 367.

³² Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy*, 367.

³³ *The English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 1 Sa 3:20.

and there has also been a great defeat among the people. Your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.”³⁴ And at the hearing of these words, “Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.”³⁵ This indeed was a catastrophic day, but a successor had been prepared and the leadership transition was seamless.

David was anointed king over twenty years before the death of Saul. God also arranged events and circumstances that caused the people to identify David as the eventual successor. King Saul himself had said to David: “I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands.”³⁶ Indeed, God prepared David to be seen as a leader in the eye of the people. He won battles against the Philistines and the women sang his praises. Even though Saul did all he could to stop David from succeeding him, the king himself along with Jonathan acknowledged that David would be the successor.

There are two important points to be understood here. Though he was anointed and groomed by God to be made king after Saul; David never did anything against Saul to undermine his leadership and usurp power. He was a good soldier and served his leader with loyalty. David and the people knew that there was only one king at a time. The existence of a succession plan did not prevent Saul from serving his full terms in office. Neither did it hasten his demise. A possible successor must always sincerely and

³⁴ *The English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 1 Sa 4:17–18.

³⁵ *The English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 1 Sa 4:18.

³⁶ 1 Samuel 24:20.

vigorously support the leadership of his or her predecessor and never do anything to undermine the sitting leader. That would be a sign that the person is not “a capable and suitable” successor.

The second lesson from the Saul to David transition is that the sitting leader or pastor does not need to feel threatened by the success of a possible successor. On the contrary, a good leader will train, groom and prepare possible successors. This is what legacy is about. History reveals that the attempt to eliminate possible successors does not grant immortality to sitting leaders. The leaders who empower successors continue to influence the organization long after they had left their position. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the treasury departments at the higher levels of the organization often experience seamless transitions from the sitting treasurer to the under-treasurer. There have also been many cases of seamless transitions from executive secretaries to presidents or from associate pastors to lead pastor.

Time and again we discover that when leadership transitions were initiated by God and when the people were spiritually and mentally prepared, the transfer of power was smoother, healthier and more effective. Hence, the reason why after careful study of several leadership transitions occurrences in the Bible, I have selected Deuteronomy 31:7-8 for the Old Testament foundation of the project.

New Testament Foundation

Introduction

Jesus Christ himself planned the best model for leadership transition. It is interesting that Jesus’ public earthly ministry lasted three-and-a-half years, and Thom

Rainer discovered that “pastors generally don’t stay long at churches. The average tenure is between three and four years.”³⁷ In the New Testament, an instructive model for implementation of leadership transition and succession begins with Jesus’ Farewell Discourse from John 13 to John 16 and finishes with the final commissioning of Peter in John 21:15-18. Peter is not the sole leader. Did Jesus deliberately send mixed signal concerning his successor? The Holy Spirit is the promised comforter who will guide them, teach them and empower them to accomplish their mission. At first, there seems to be a contradiction because Jesus clearly announces the Holy Spirit as the Advocate, the successor teacher, that will stay with the disciples. Then, in John 21, there is an obvious establishment of Peter as the lead successor shepherd. Peter himself would need the consolation and power of the Spirit to be able to accomplish his mission.

The supreme legacy that Jesus bequeathed to his Church from the Upper Room was the promise of the Holy Spirit. Five times, as recorded in these discourses from John’s gospel, the Master reiterates this precious promise to his dazed disciples. He will not leave them as flock untended but will pray the Father who will give them another representative to be with them for ever, even the Spirit of Truth.³⁸

Indeed, Jesus had been preparing the disciples for his departure and this transition very early in his short time of ministry. He had told them that the full empowerment would only come after Pentecost. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”³⁹ It is no coincidence that the average tenure of pastors in a church is

³⁷ Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 57.

³⁸ Leonard Griffith, *The Eternal Legacy from the Upper Room* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), 98.

³⁹ Acts 1:8.

between three and four years in the United States of America⁴⁰ as was the time of the Lord's public ministry. The farewell discourse demonstrates the Master's intentionality and purposefulness in preparing the disciples for his departure. John 13 to 16 is the overt proclamation of what Jesus had been trying to tell his followers multiple times before, but they could not understand it. John 21 is the anointing of the spiritual lamb's feeder who will be comforted, taught and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

I have chosen this text because it complements my understanding of Deuteronomy 31:7-8, the Old Testament foundation text. Specifically, I selected John 21:15-17 as the New Testament foundation passage because of its many similarities with Deuteronomy 31. The reaction of the disciples to the statements of Jesus concerning his departure displays common attributes with the reaction of church members in this age when first confronted with the reality of the departure of a beloved pastor. I will also study some of the actions taken by Jesus to insure an orderly transition and continuity after his departure. The leadership-transition process which our Lord begins in the Farewell Discourse will not be complete until after his resurrection on the shore of Galilee when he will empower Peter's leadership in the presence of the other disciples. This text will be analyzed carefully and conclude with a summary of the findings of this study and propose an applicable, biblical model for pastoral and leadership transition.

Context of the New Testament Foundation Text

Jesus had been with his disciples for three and half years. They have seen him performed great miracles and they truly believed that he was the Son of God, the king of

⁴⁰ Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 57.

Israel, the Messiah who came to restore Israel and delivered his people from their enemies and the Romans. He healed the sick and fed multitudes. The resurrection of Lazarus in John 12 proved beyond a shadow of doubt, that he had messianic power even over death. His apostles believed in him; and even those who did not believe in him and wanted to kill him, acknowledged that “the whole world has gone after him.”⁴¹

It is at that moment that, instead of establishing his kingdom in Israel, Jesus had to prepare his disciples for his death. Many wanted to make him king while others wanted to kill him. He knew, however, that it was about time to go. John 13:1 tells us “Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” A leader or pastor must always know when it is time to go. Even more than knowing when to depart, it is essential for wise pastoral leaders to prepare themselves and the congregation for the hour of their departure. The preparation should begin the very first day one is installed and inaugurated. The pilgrim motive will compel us to love our members, parishioners or disciples and love them enough to prepare them for successful ministry after the leader’s departure. Our foundational text shows that Jesus was even more concerned for the success of the disciples after he left than while he was on earth with them. Church members may act certain ways when the leaders are present and act differently in the absence of leadership. For reasons that vary, depending on the cultural and socio-religious norms of the congregation, the attitude and behavior of members are different both socially and spiritually whether or not the spiritual leader is present. The true measure of success of a spiritual leader is the attitude of the members towards him or her

⁴¹ John 12:19.

after he or she no longer pastors the congregation. In some cases, they will praise God, feast and celebrate the transfer of a pastor with thanksgiving because they have been delivered. In other cases, they will deeply mourn and grieve the pastor's departure and sorely miss him or her. Our text shows that Jesus was very concerned and wanted to assure the disciples' continued wellbeing after his death. Thom Rainer discovered this quality in what he calls "legacy leaders." These leaders "are not merely concerned about the church during their lifetime; they seek to make decision that will affect the church after they are gone."⁴²

Another important issue is the relationship between the departing and the incoming pastor. After having prepared the disciples for his departure, Jesus states "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever."⁴³ The choice of the word advocate, comforter,⁴⁴ is itself very telling. It acknowledges that they will be grieved by his departure and will need comfort. It tells them that they are not losing by his going they are in fact gaining another comforter. "I will not leave you orphaned."⁴⁵

Jesus also announces that the succeeding helper, advocate and comforter is up to the task. He tells his disciples that there will be continuity and unity of purpose between him and the incoming Advocate. When in transition, the primary goal is not the pastors'

⁴² Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 44.

⁴³ The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, John 14:15-16.

⁴⁴ As translated by KJV, ASV, ERV, WBT.

⁴⁵ John 14:18 (NRSV).

comfort, but the members'. This does not mean that the minister is not saddened; but even in his or her own depressing time, the minister remains a caring shepherd.

When the congregation realizes from the words and attitude of the departing pastor that he is united in purpose with the incoming pastor, both ministers and the congregation will benefit. When the members discern that the departing leader is trying to undercut what the incoming leader intends to do, or if the new leader tries to undo what his or her predecessor had done, they are both losers along with the congregation. This will bring pain and distress instead of comfort to the church membership. The minister who has been through transfers in ministry and has reached a level of maturity in the development of his or her faith will remember that leadership transition is not about himself or herself; it is about the spiritual wellbeing and comfort of the members.

Jesus was not threatened by the incoming Spirit that would empower Peter and the other disciples; nor was he depressed by his having to leave because he knew where he came from and where he was going. John reveals the intentionality and security of the departing leader in saying that Jesus "knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."⁴⁶ He was not dealing with insecurity. A minister who feels inwardly compelled to undercut a successor or undo the work of a predecessor may be suffering from low self-esteem. Raymond F. Culpepper, citing a study of all Protestant denominations in the United States, found that:

- 45 percent of pastors suffer from burnout
- 70 percent have a lower self-esteem than when they entered the ministry
- 95 percent struggle with discouragement
- 80 percent say ministry negatively affects their family

⁴⁶ John 13:1-2 .

- 70 percent of pastors say they have no close friends⁴⁷

A pastor who is anchored in a strong sense of purpose and motivated by love for his church members will not need to aggrieve them by trying to minimize or discredit the ministry of a fellow minister who either succeeds or precedes him or her. On the contrary, pastors will build another. A good preacher will take a cue from Christ and affirm the ministry of a successor or predecessor. The following is an outline of the transition from Jesus to his disciples.

1. Jesus started talking about his death and departure early on his earthly ministry
2. The time of his departure was set by God. The apostles and disciples were not ready to accept the idea of his departure. Matthew reports that Peter, the successor, in waiting even rebuke him for talking about leaving. “Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”⁴⁸
3. He spoke more overtly as his departure drew near.
4. He took action to assure continuity of ministry after he leaves. He announced the coming of the Holy Spirit as the new comforter and introduced Peter as the new shepherd.
5. By stating that the Holy Spirit will remind all that “I have taught you,” Jesus publicly shows support for the successor and confirmed that the departing leader and the incoming teacher were united.
6. He charged them to remain united after his departure.
7. He had a farewell dinner.

Jesus in John’s gospel is very intentional. From the first verse of the book stating that “in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God,”⁴⁹ John establishes the divinity of Christ. He started very early to prepare his disciples for his departure and his death. “By both word and by deed, Jesus demonstrates that success in

⁴⁷ Raymond F. Culpepper, *No Church Left Behind: Every Church Can Be G.R.E.A.T.* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2007), 29.

⁴⁸ Matthew 16:23.

⁴⁹ John 1:1.

ministry is defined by successors.”⁵⁰ There are several covert references to his death because the people and disciples were not yet ready to understand the necessity of his death. They loved him and accepted him as Lord and they could not imagine life without him. Yet, he knew he needed to prepare them for the day that he would no longer be with them. Some of his statements preparing the disciples for the transition would only be understood after his death. The parabolic references to his death and resurrection began in chapter 2:19. “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” Other early references to his death include John 7:33-36, John 8:12, John 8:21, John 8:28, John 9:4-5, John and 10:11,16. “Jesus’ first disciples needed to trust Jesus and believe that his departure was for their eternal good, so we today need to trust Jesus and believe that his now long-past departure is for our eternal good. In both cases, it is the long-range view that lends stability to faith”⁵¹

After the death and resurrection of Lazarus which eventually led to Caiaphas’ prophesying that it is “better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish,”⁵² Jesus started to openly prepare the disciples for life after his death and resurrection. He overtly talked about his death, burial and resurrection. In chapter 12, he clearly referred to his death, but still the apostles were not able to comprehend the words of the Master. When Mary Madeleine anointed his feet with an expensive perfume and

⁵⁰ William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession that Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2014), 25.

⁵¹ D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus: An Exposition of John 14-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 23.

⁵² John 11:50.

Judas objected, Jesus replied: “Leave her alone, it was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.”⁵³

I would argue that the setting for the introduction of the farewell discourse begins in John 12:23, when the Greeks came to seek the Lord after his triumphal donkey-ride entry in Jerusalem, when the crowd received him with palm branches shouting “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!”⁵⁴ Jesus’ response reveals a sense of mission accomplished. He did not even address Philipp and Andrew’s announcement that some Greeks wanted to see him. This seemed to have been a signal that it was now time to clearly announce that the day of his departure is at hand. “Jesus replied: ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.’”⁵⁵

The structure of the contextual Farewell Discourse in general and of our text in particular is very revealing. Jesus repeatedly refers the Holy Spirit in the Farewell Discourse (John 14:15-21, 25-27; 15:26-27; 16:7-15).

The Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, is thus an admirable substitute for Jesus. He ministers to the disciples in many ways Jesus did; but in particular he communicates to them the fullest explanation of Jesus’ mission. Even the mysteries surrounding Jesus’ departure will become clear once the Spirit of truth has elucidated the matter. In these many ways, the promised Paraclete is the

⁵³ John 12:7.

⁵⁴ John 12:13.

⁵⁵ John 12:23-25.

appropriate substitute for Jesus.⁵⁶

Jesus does not leave to chance that the disciples have to figure out that even in his absence he is making available to them a guide in the person of the Spirit.

Pre-Crucifixion Holy Spirit and Peter

In the Farewell Discourse of Jesus, leading to his arrest, passion and crucifixion, the Master focusses on the Holy Spirit as the succeeding comforter, teacher and reminder of all that he has taught the disciples. Peter and all of the disciples were not prepared to hear any commissioning of Peter or any other disciples. In fact, the opposite was the case. Jesus announces that they will be scattered. Concerning Peter, Jesus announces, “before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!”⁵⁷ Peter’s answer was very sincere and devout, though ignorant of the future. Jesus understood the sincerity of Peter’s heart and looked beyond his ignorance. Hidden in his statement announcing the impending troubles of Peter were a prediction that he would overcome the trials and that afterwards, Peter in return will need to strengthen his brothers. “Simon, Simon,” Jesus said, “Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”⁵⁸ Jesus had prayed for Peter before he faced the lowest moments of temptations in their relationship.

After Peter’s denials, Luke 22: 61 notes that “The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: ‘Before the

⁵⁶ Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus*, 53.

⁵⁷ John 13:38.

⁵⁸ Luke 22:31-32.

rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.’” Luke is the only gospel to record this very special and deeply intimate moment when “in the midst of his own awful passion, Jesus’ heart thinks of Peter and with a look at the man on whose lips the fearful denials are still trembling reaches into that man’s soul in order to save him.”⁵⁹ This was not an ordinary look. Rick Brannan and Israel Loken rightly express the tenderness and depth of the look with the adverb “intently” in Luke 22:61: “τοῦ λόγου τοῦ κυρίου - And the Lord turned around *and* looked intently at Peter.”⁶⁰

This eye to eye encounter between Jesus and Peter in this particular moment conveyed the Lord’s love and forgiveness for his disciple. It would prove to be an important lesson for Peter who was soon going to receive the command to feed the lambs. Leaders – even in the midst of their own pain, suffering and depression – have to lovingly look out for their flocks even when the member in need denies his or her leadership. Lenski correctly comments that

...because he [Jesus] foresaw Peter’s situation at this moment and intended that Peter should recall that word to his great benefit. So the tension of his fear was released at last, the warning of his Lord’s love came back in his soul, the way to genuine repentance was opened.⁶¹

I submit that this was also part of Peter’s leadership preparation. Jesus wanted him to know that he still loved him and had great plans for his life. Most of all, he wanted the leader in the making to be a future source of strength for those who will need his help and understanding in their times of denials and weakness. The immediate context leading to

⁵⁹ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1090.

⁶⁰ Rick Brannan and Israel Loken, *The Lexham Textual Notes on the Bible*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), Lk 22:61a.

⁶¹ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1090–1091.

Simon declaration that he was willing to die for Jesus was, when the Lord in the upper room, in the presence of all the disciples, turn to Peter and said: “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”⁶² Mark Black surmised that not only does this declaration reveal that Peter is seen as a leader but also underscores the need for prayer in the lives of pastoral leaders. Black declared that “Jesus speaks these words to Peter because he has emerged as the leader among the disciples. However, Jesus encourages them by telling them he has been praying for Peter to be strong. Once again, the power of prayer is emphasized.”⁶³ In addition to the emphasis on the power of prayer, this declaration showed that when faced with trials, we can have the assurance that Jesus has already prayed for us. Jesus clearly wanted to warn Peter and his other hearers, that the denials would not be the end. Black further affirms the implication was that “Peter will falter for a short period, after which he will turn back and strengthen the disciples. By telling this story, Luke prepares the reader for the leadership of Peter in the early chapters of Acts.”⁶⁴ This was the last reference to Peter before his crucifixion.

The Commissioning of Peter

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’ Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of my sheep.’

The third time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was

⁶² Luke 22:31-32.

⁶³ Mark C. Black, *Luke, College Press NIV Commentary* (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 1995), Luke 22:31-32.

⁶⁴ Black, *Luke, College Press NIV Commentary*, Luke 22:31-32.

hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ He said, ‘Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my sheep.’⁶⁵

This text is the final act of transition, when Jesus actually establishes the leadership of Peter as the succeeding shepherd. Before we can fully examine John 21:15-17, we need to examine and study Mathew 16:18 where many scholars arguably see the announcement of succession or even the establishment of Peter as Jesus’ successor. I contend that Jesus’ intention concerning Peter’s destiny is revealed from the initial calling of the disciple when He said “you are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas (which, when translated, is Peter)”⁶⁶. Others argue that the succession from Jesus to Peter indeed started in Mathew 16:18 when Jesus said: “I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it”.

Word Study

Marvin Richardson Vincent has studied this text in depth and noted that in the expression “on this rock” (ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ), the word πέτρᾳ is feminine, and means a *rock*, as distinguished from a *stone* or a *fragment of rock* (πέτρος,). Used of a *ledge of rocks* or a *rocky peak*.⁶⁷ The author of this paper, however, disagrees with the position of Vincent among others who claim that the word πέτρᾳ in ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ “refers neither to *Christ* as a *rock*, distinguished from *Simon*, a *stone*, nor to *Peter’s confession*, but to *Peter himself*, in a sense defined by his previous confession, and as enlightened by

⁶⁵ John 21:15-17.

⁶⁶ John 1:42.

⁶⁷ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 91.

the “Father in Heaven.”⁶⁸ I maintain that the rock upon which the church is built is not Petros, Cephas, the feeble and changeable apostle, but on Petra, Christ, the solid Rock of ages. My position is supported by many scholars including Nolland John who remarks that “the OT stone texts that clearly have an influence on the NT understanding of rock, are Ps. 118:22; Is. 8:14; 28:16. Ps. 118:22 will be applied to Jesus himself in Mt. 21:42.”⁶⁹ There are of course several other Old Testament texts that support the position that Christ is the Rock. The prophet Isaiah makes it clear that we must “trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal.”⁷⁰

Mathew 16:18 has to be understood in parallel to the preceding affirmation and confession of Peter in response to the question Jesus asked all the disciples: “Who do men say that I am?” Peter’s response is: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”⁷¹ And Jesus responds: “you are Petros...” “The whole clause σὺ εἶ Πέτρος (‘you are Peter’) mirrors σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός (‘you are the Christ’) of Peter’s confession in v. 16 (a reference to the name ‘Peter’ is an inalienable part of the material, but something like ‘you shall be called Peter’ would be possible). The mirroring looks is designed to strengthen further the link between verses 18 to 19 and verse 16.”⁷² John Nolland explains that:

The very fact of the choice of different words suggests that in this case some difference of meaning is intended (πέτρος in both places would have served better

⁶⁸ Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 91.

⁶⁹ John Nolland, “Preface,” in *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 671.

⁷⁰ Isaiah 26:4.

⁷¹ Matthew 16:16.

⁷² Nolland, “Preface,” in *The Gospel of Matthew*, 667.

for the sense: ‘You are Peter, and on this rock/stone [which you are] I will build my church’). At the same time the two words can hardly be understood as marking a clear contrast (e.g., ‘you are Peter = [little stone], but it is on this [much greater solid] rock that I will build my church’). The wordplay, particularly when based on a name given by Jesus, lacks meaning unless the name points towards the identity of ‘this rock’. The change of words encourages the linking of ταύτη (‘this’) not to the immediately preceding Πέτρος (‘Peter’), but back via v. 17 to the confession of v. 16. This confession will, however, be ‘this rock’ precisely as Peter’s confession since this is what gives substance to the wordplay.⁷³

It is clear from the biblical record that Jesus intended for Peter to be a leading apostle.

The use of ‘I will build’ also reserves for Jesus the position of prime mover in what is to happen on the basis of the role to which Peter is called: though the foundational role of Peter is important, it is Jesus who will build the church.⁷⁴

Peter would have to go through trials, tribulations, humiliations and exaltations before he could be steady and ready for the task of lead shepherd. Until he is ready for the charge, the Holy Spirit would be tasked with the role of comforter. When the time is right, as we find later in John 21, Jesus himself will establish Peter.

In Deuteronomy, Moses told the people and Joshua that the Lord himself will go before you. Joshua was going to be the human leader, but both the new leader and the people needed to remember that Yahweh was the abiding presence who would guarantee success. We see the same argument in John. Jesus made it clear that as He leaves, He would not leave the disciples orphaned. The Holy Spirit was going to be the guiding force after the Lord’s departure. Peter was going to be the human face and lead apostle through the empowerment of the Paraclete. In the Old Testament, the New Testament and today, leaders will come and go but the assurance of success and survivor is the abiding, omnipresence of God in the church.

⁷³ Nolland, “Preface,” in *The Gospel of Matthew*, 669.

⁷⁴ Nolland, “Preface,” in *The Gospel of Matthew*, 672.

The complexities of the Trinity and our inherent limitation in understanding the workings of the Godhead, which are transparent throughout the Bible and very present in our Biblical foundations texts, will make it less obvious than can be seen in Deuteronomy. Others may argue that there is no leadership transition between Jesus and Peter. We will prove that John 21:15-17 remains a good New Testament foundation for effective pastoral leadership transition.

This text is at the end of a meal, a breakfast prepared by Jesus before the commission of Peter, after the resurrection and the apparent close of the book of John. The scene and imagery recall the last scene in the upper room before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. This time, it is not supper. It is breakfast.

Come and have breakfast. The imagery is stunning. It juxtaposes the night that the Lord was betrayed and when Jesus predicted that Peter would deny him three times. That was a supper, the Last Supper which was at night – just before he was betrayed, just before his arrest, crucifixion and death. This leadership transition meal is breakfast; it is in the morning. It is as the continuation of the mission since the Last Supper.

The night before, he was crucified. It seems like it has all been a very long dark stretch: Gethsemane, the denials, crucifixion and death. Yes, after that came the resurrection. Now, it is a new day and a new leader is about to be established. In the Last Supper, Jesus took bread and wine to symbolize his blood that was to be shed on the cross. This time, it is not bread and wine that represent his blood to be spilled on the cross for the remission of sin. That has already been accomplished. The connection to and continuity from the Last Supper was clearly on the author's mind. Bread and fish. The

man he called to make fisher of men is about to hear from the Lord that his mission is to shepherd the flock, to feed the lambs.

Outline of the text (verses)

1. 15a - Introduction. It is after a meal and between Jesus and Simon.
2. 15b - Jesus to Simon: ἀγαπᾷς με Do you love me more than theses?
3. 15c - Simon to Jesus: φιλῶ σε. Yes Lord, you know I love you.
4. 15d - Jesus to Simon: Feed my lambs.
5. 16a - Jesus to Simon: son of John, ἀγαπᾷς με, - Do you truly love me?
6. 16b - Simon Yes, Lord, φιλῶ σε. You know that I love you. No difference from his first answer in 15c.
7. 16c - Jesus: Take care of my sheep.
8. 17a - Jesus: Simon son of John φιλεῖς με; Do you love me?
9. 17b - Breaks from the dialogue and gives insight into the inner feeling of Simon. He was “hurt” because Jesus asked him the third time do you love me?
10. 17c - Simon to Jesus: Κύριε, πάντα σὺ οἶδας, σὺ γινώσκεις ὅτι φιλῶ σε Lord you know all things, you know that I love you... [Leaders at all level need to always remember these truths: The members are the Lord’s sheep not the leaders’ and that the Lord knows all things. The lambs and sheep may not know everything but the Lord knows all things. He knows even our deepest feelings].
11. 17d - Jesus to Simon: Feed my sheep.
12. 18. - Jesus’ prediction of what will happen to Peter is a recurring motif in the bible during the final discourse of leaders and the transfer of leadership. Again this is a blowback to the final discourse in the Upper Room when Jesus predicted Peter’s denials. The language similarity is punctuated by the two-fold repetition Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν. Abbott is on point in stating that “Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν occurs twenty-five times (ἀμὴν never) and is used in predictions (1:51, 13:21, 13:38, 21:18) of good and of evil including the prediction of betrayal.”⁷⁵

The main characters are Jesus and Simon Peter. The other disciples are witnesses to these things when they had finished eating (v.15). The meal was the preparation. When it comes to pastoral transition, I submit that it is a good idea for the new pastor to share a meal with his or her new members the day of his or her installation.

⁷⁵ Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), 454.

Conclusion

John 21 is a good parallel to the Moses to Joshua succession process. First, it is a parting address as in Deuteronomy. Second, it contains several elements relating to pastoral transition as found in Deuteronomy 31, especially the fact that Jesus started very early to prepare the disciples for his departure with special attention given to Peter. Third, the components of Moses to Joshua and Jesus to the Apostles transition are applicable to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and other Protestant denominations ministry contexts today.

What we have found is that Deuteronomy 31:7-8 strongly supports the leadership transition model being proposed here. At the time of the application of the leadership change, all the people were involved. Moses went around all Israel in our view to say thank you, to say goodbye and to solicit support for Joshua the incoming leader. Then, the actual transfer of power happened in the presence of all Israel. Moses' parting words reaffirm the reality that Joshua, who had proved himself to be a strong and courageous leader, was indeed prepared for the task ahead. Joshua's readiness notwithstanding, Moses reminded both the people and their new leader that their ultimate security is God, who will still be their guide. God will go before them. God will deliver the Promised Land to them. God will never abandon them.

We can also conclude that the Old Testament foundation text presents certain characteristics of both incoming and outgoing leaders. The church and the leader must be assured of the continued guiding presence of God, especially during times of transitions. A good leader will be sure to follow God and remember that God is the one leading His people. The people will follow us as we follow God the Omnipresent leader. As Paul told

the Corinthians, “be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”⁷⁶ A Christ-like leader will be strong and courageous because sometimes leaders must make tough and brave decisions. Our texts show that pastors at all times must know that God is always present with them. He will never leave them nor forsake them. God’s supportive, abiding and comforting presence is not contingent on the church assignment or the position a person occupies. God goes before us to prepare the way and guarantees our success. God marches with us to give us strength and courage; and yes, God is still with us when we are transferred to or from a church position.

The Old and New Testaments foundations both have shown that for leadership transitions to be effective, they must be planned long before it is time to implement the pastoral moves. In both cases, Moses to Joshua and Jesus to his disciples and particularly Peter, there was a deliberate preparation and empowerment of the successor. The predecessor prepared the people to accept the successor’s leadership. God instructed Moses to send his young helper to many important missions. Joshua’s valiant response and report following one such mission, the exploration of Canaan by the twelve spies, established him in the eyes of the people as a brave and fearless leader. Likewise, early on, Jesus had asked his disciples an intriguing question: “Who do you say I am?”⁷⁷ Peter’s response was insightful, inspirational and brave, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”⁷⁸ Jesus answered that “this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build

⁷⁶ 1Corinthians 11:1.

⁷⁷ Matthew 16:15.

⁷⁸ Matthew 16:16.

my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”⁷⁹ This declaration definitely established Peter as an insightful, discerning leading apostle. Both Joshua and Peter were prepared long before the departure of their predecessor. Francis Glasson correctly wrote that:

Peter as the leading disciple is called to tend the sheep (21:15-17) as Jesus had done (ch. 10). As we have seen, there is the coincidence and it may be more, that both Joshua (at least in later tradition) and Peter were told to be mindful of the lambs. Without relying upon the point which emerge only in later sources, I think we can claim that the parallels are sufficiently striking to be significant.⁸⁰

We have also determined that in both the Old and New Testaments texts, God was the actual leader. Therefore, we conclude that while it is important to prepare for the leadership transition, while the participation of the congregation, the conference, the incoming and outgoing pastors is necessary and required, it is the Omnipresence of God who goes before the leaders to guarantee success for the church. Ellen White was inspired when she wrote that: “The higher the position a man occupies, the greater the responsibility that he has to bear, the wider will be the influence that he exerts and the greater his need of dependence on God. Position does not give holiness of character. It is by honoring God and obeying His commands that a man is made truly great. Of necessity men must bear responsibilities; but instead of striving for the supremacy, he who is a true leader will pray for an understanding heart, to discern between good and evil.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Matthew 16:17-19.

⁸⁰ Francis T. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (Naperville, IL: SCM Press LTD, 1963), 85.

⁸¹ Ellen White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917), 30-31.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a church in constant transition. The church policies and governance system structurally call for continual transitions. As a matter of fact, officers at every level of the church are either nominated, appointed, elected or re-elected every one to five years. This cycle of transition and election is imbedded in constitutions and bylaws at every level of the church. There are four levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The local church, the conference or mission, the union or union mission and the General Conference. The General Conference is the highest level and is sub-structured into thirteen divisions throughout the world. The divisions serve as the headquarters of the church in their parts of the world. There are currently six General Vice Presidents of the General Conference. Every division president is an ex-officio vice-president of the General Conference, but their primary responsibility is to lead the church in their regions. At the local church, every church officer is elected or reelected every year or every two years depending on the church. At the local conference level, election is held every three or four years. Unions, Divisions and the General Conference elect or reelect their officers every five years. While nomination and election take place every year in the church; for the most part, there is no limit on the number of times an officer can be reelected. In the past ten years, there have been calls for term limits, and a few

conferences have adopted term limits. In those cases, the officers may serve and be re-elected for no more than two or three terms.

There is an incredible amount of time, money and energy spent in preparing for and conducting nominations and elections in the Adventist Church. Successions and transitions happen regularly in the church. The nomination and election process is clearly defined in the church manual for the local church and in the constitutions and bylaws of the conferences, Union, Divisions and the General Conference. However, there is no official leadership transition plan or process. Often at various levels of the church, officers are elected with absolutely no preparation for their position and no cooperation or support from their predecessor because the transition or succession was not desired by the departing pastor, director or officer. That can be costly not only for the church, but it can also destroy relationships among colleagues, terminate ministerial momentum and defecate continuity. Pastoral leadership transitions gone terribly wrong have caused many to lose confidence in the church leadership altogether. Through the years, however, many distinguished leaders have understood very well the movement and transitional motif of the church. One such leader was Elder Arthur G. Daniells who was, in a sense, the architect of our present organizational structure.

This chapter will analyze the history of the service of Elder Daniells, especially as it relates to leadership succession from his early years in ministry to his tenure as General Conference president and after. When did he begin his ministry? What was his attitude toward leadership succession? When Daniells became General Conference president, what was the process? How was his relationship with his predecessor and successor? Was he supportive of his successor? What was his attitude concerning his predecessor?

We will conclude with a description of how the Daniells' transitions and the lessons learned from them are foundational to this project to develop a model for seamless pastoral leadership transition in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

An Architect of the Church: Elder Daniells' Early Years

Born in the state of Iowa on September 28, 1858, Arthur Grosvenor Daniells grew up to become the longest serving president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His father was a physician and a Civil War veteran who died in 1963 when Arthur was only five years old. His mother, Mary Jane McQuillain-Daniells, died in November 1921, and was survived by two other children: Charles and Jessie Daniells-Hare. Arthur was the oldest of the three children. A. G. Daniells was ten years old when he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. It is said that "in his boyhood he was upright, true, sincere and kindly disposed."¹ As a boy he was "a brave hearted burden bearer, a comfort to his mother, and an earnest, humble Christian lad in his home community."²

In 1875, he entered Battle Creek College (Now Andrews University) as a student and stayed there for one year. He was married to Mary Ellen Hoyt on November 30, 1876, and from their union came one son, Arthur Grosvenor Daniells, Jr. In 1878, he served as an intern to Elder Robert Kilgore before becoming an aid and secretary to James and Ellen White. This relationship with the Whites lasted until Daniells' death. He continually sought guidance from Ellen White during his years of service and often

¹ C. H. Watson, "Comfort in Sorrow," *Review and Herald* 112, no. 16 (April 18, 1935): 3.

² Watson, "Comfort in Sorrow."

waited for Sister Whites' advice before making major decisions. When she was advanced in years, Elder Daniells maintained this same close relationship with the Whites by writing regularly to Arthur White, often asking Arthur to seek the guidance of his mother on important matters of the church. At times, when Daniells, the sitting president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was dealing with challenging issues, he often received very timely letters from Ellen White offering guidance. He vividly expressed his appreciation in a letter to W. C. White on October 23, 1903.

It will be impossible for me to state as clearly and forcibly, and I fear, as accurately as I would like the facts relating to the reception, presentation and influence of the Testimonies received from your mother during our recent council. Never in my life have I seen such signal evidence of the leadership of an all-wise Being as I have seen in connection with the experiences referred to. Only the divine mind could have foreseen our condition and needs, and have sent us the exact help we needed at precisely the right moment. I believe that this is the feeling of every member of the council.³

Following his ministerial internship with Kilgore and his apprenticeship with the Whites, Daniells returned to Iowa and serves as an evangelist and small-group bible study leader before receiving an official call from the church.

A Call to Missionary Work

In 1886, Arthur G. Daniells received a call to serve in New Zealand and later Australia. Though only twenty-eight years of age, Arthur and his young wife accepted this life changing appointment that transformed their lives and ministry for ever. He stayed overseas for fourteen years from 1889 to 1891 as president of the New Zealand Conference, and from 1892 and 1896 as president of the Australian Conference and

³ Box 1, Fld 16, A.G. Daniells (Collection 227), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

eventually under his leadership the Australian Union Conference was organized. Daniells was an articulate preacher, a humble, yet brave and effective administrator.

Under his leadership the present organization of the field began to take shape. It was there that the union conference feature of our work was originated, and with it the departmental features were developed. There, too, in laying the foundations of the educational, medical, publishing, Missionary Volunteer (now AYS) and other distinctive lines of institutional and departmental service.⁴

In 1900, the Daniells returned to the United States.

Elder Daniells was a man in touch with his infirmities and shortcoming. His writings are depleted with expressions of self-awareness and acknowledgement of his sinful and limited nature. He once told Ellen White, "I may say that I am glad to receive any words of warning you may have for me. I know very well that my labors are defective and many times I fear that they are well nigh useless, but I desire to know where the fault is and correct it as far as it is possible."⁵ These acknowledgements reveal the earnestness and the deep passion in the soul relationship this man had with Christ. In 1891, he wrote the following to Haskell:

Now my dear brother I praise God for what I have seen and realized. I never saw the nothingness of man before as I do now. Surely no flesh will ever be able to glory in God's presence. Never. It is God that worketh in us the 'will' or desire to do right and it is he that worketh in us to 'do' that which is right. And it is God that gives us faith to connect with himself. God does it all yet imputes it to us simply because we accept him and choose to die to sin and deny self. Looking to Christ to make me right and keep me right has brought victories which I have longed for years.⁶

⁴ Watson, "Comfort in Sorrow."

⁵ Box 1, Fld 3, A. G. Daniells (Collection 227), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁶ Box 1, Fld 1, A. G. Daniells (Collection 227), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

Daniells was always concerned with the spirituality of the leaders of the church, especially the ministers. He often wrote to Ellen White to express his concern for the church leaders. In one such letter in 1892, after reporting on the council meetings and the progress of the church in Australia, the president's words revealed a very concerned person for the spirituality of the people, including some of the leaders of the church. The last paragraph of the last letter sent to Sister White in 1892 was written on December 30, 1892. It is very telling: "Well, the people all inquire about you and seem very thankful that you were here so long. A portion of the church is going forward but others are not. The light is leaving them. I fear I have done all I know how to do for them. I am glad you're praying for us. With Christian love A G Daniells."⁷

He ended 1892 with a gloomy assessment, but entered 1893 with a new determination, new vigor and program for the young people. The involvement of the younger members reenergized his spirit, encouraged his soul and affected his staff and the field. When he wrote to Ellen White in March 1893, he was upbeat and encouraged.

Some things are quite encouraging. Every hand in the office has taken hold anew, and I believe the younger employees have had a better experience than they have ever had before. They all take hold and speak and pray every time there is an opportunity for them to do so. Not one holds back. I regret that some of the older ones did not see the importance of attending the meetings and coming in personal contact with the hands in their spiritual experiences. I fear they will not fully appreciate the tenderness of the plants and water them as they might had they entered into the personal efforts to seek new experiences.⁸

One of Elder Daniells' strong trait of character is that he was not afraid to venture into new programs, explore new ideas, and try different strategies. This of course helped

⁷ Box 1, Fld 2, A. G. Daniells (Collection 227), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁸ Box 1, Field 3, A. G. Daniells (Collection 227), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

him to prepare for and adjust to every leadership transitions and periods in his life. With every new initiative came new vigor and the involvement of other people, often younger people. He delighted himself in doing new thing for the Lord. He was also happy to learn new things and receive new revelations from God. The involvement and the youth in a new missionary meeting he started for them brought great joy to his heart. He reported his joy to Ellen White when he penned these words saying:

“We started a young people branch of missionary meeting about forty attended so far. They all meet with the senior society for singing, prayer, and the reading of the minutes . . . As I look at those forty young people I can see that our work with them is very important. If all of them were to become truly converted and become Bible students and true missionary workers and all this is just what ought to be, they would be a great blessing to this church.”⁹

He did not see these young people as a threat to his own leadership. He saw their potential to be “true missionary workers” who could render years of great services to the church. Daniells therefore had spiritual foresight. That is also why he was not threatened by the spiritual gift of Ellen White. Rather, he always sought her advice and guidance in important matters. Again and again, Daniells proved to be a leader who was aware of his shortcomings, in contact with his own feelings and not afraid to try new spiritual or missionary ventures and appreciate the spiritual gifts of others.

General Conference Leadership Transition in 1901

In 1901, the General Conference session was particularly challenging for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The sitting president had been serving for just four years. Ellen White had not attended a General Conference session for ten years. She was more

⁹ Box 1, Fld 3, A. G. Daniells (Collection 227), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI..

advanced in years and had an epochal message for the church. Change was in the air and the need to focus on mission was the order of the session. Ellen White addressed the delegates, and by the time the session was over, the delegates had elected Daniells new chairman of the General Conference. He was forty-three years old and had a mandate for reformation. The actual structure of the church and its overseas mission emphasis were all implanted during the time when Elder Daniells was president. In 1922, Elder Spicer, the executive secretary under Daniells, was elected president of the General Conference in a seamless leadership transition.

Transitions and Relationship with Predecessors and Successors

The Daniells-to-Spicer succession serves as an example of healthy and effective succession in the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Spicer had served as executive secretary for twenty years while Daniells was president. The sitting president opened the General Conference session and introduced Elder Spicer to preach the first message of the session. Daniells introduced Spicer forcefully and enthusiastically.

It is not for me to occupy the evening. We are to hear from – I think I may say, the veteran secretary of the General Conference. He has been with us in this capacity now for twenty years, and has traveled over the wide world during that time, inspecting missions, counseling with missionaries and making himself acquainted with conditions . . . We are glad to welcome Brother Spicer back from his long journey, and to have him address us here in this first meeting of this important conference.¹⁰

The conference opened on Thursday evening, May 11, 1922. Eleven days later on Monday May 22, 1922, both men stood together on the platform to sustained applause as the delegates unanimously voted Spicer as president and Daniells as secretary. This was a

¹⁰ *The General Conference Bulletin*, 40th Session, 9 No. 1 (May 14, 1922) Mountain View, CA), 2.

smooth leadership succession indeed. Daniells went on to serve four years as General Conference secretary. The effective transition allowed both men to continue to serve the church.

Commonalities with the Moses-Joshua Succession

The Daniells to Spicer transition bears several commonalities with the Moses-Joshua succession in the Old Testament foundation text of this project.

1. Moses desired to continue to cross over the Jordan, but God said no and instructed Moses to complete the succession plan. In 1922, Elder Daniells still desired to serve and did continue to serve, but God willed that he would move to other endeavors. He moved from being president to serving as executive secretary.
2. Moses and Joshua appeared together before the people. Daniells and Spicer also appeared together before the people who vigorously applauded both men. For the rank and file officers and church members, such demonstration of unity from both departing and incoming leaders gathers support for and acceptance of the new leader.
3. Moses went around in a show of unity with and support for his successor Joshua. Daniells and Spicer also were united and displayed Christian unity. Having spoken well of his successor, Daniells as president had called for unity and asked Spicer to pray. Daniells was willing to serve as secretary to Spicer. He went around the world not as president but representing his successor and bringing greetings from him all over the world.

4. The Moses – Joshua succession was not a rejection of Moses. God commended Moses, and the people still very much loved the beloved departing leader. Likewise, God and the people very much loved Elder Daniells and the people immensely appreciated his unparalleled service. But, it was time for a successor. He had served in the position of president and mentally prepared himself for the time when he would transition out of that position. The smooth transition allowed Daniells, the departing leader, to continue his ministry and service to the church. He did not object to going from being the number one to number two leader of the church.
5. Moses did not stand in the way of his successor, and Joshua did not solicit criticism of his predecessor. In fact, he followed the instructions of Moses. Continuity of ministry and purpose was essential for the community. The record shows that Spicer did not seek to undo the accomplishment of his predecessor. On the contrary, he continued the reforms and organizational structures put in place under Daniells. Both leaders realized that the church is bigger than them. Even after he was no longer secretary of the General Conference, Daniells was appointed president of the board of trustees of the College of Medical Evangelist, now Loma Loma Linda University. Percy T. Magan, who was president of the college at the time, testified that under Daniells' "direction the spiritual side of the work blossomed forth as with the touch of a new life."¹¹

¹¹ Percy T. Magan, "Life Sketch of Arthur Grosvenor Daniells," *Review and Herald* 112, no. 16 (April 18, 1935): 2.

Daniells' Transitions in Later Years

Following his years as secretary, Daniells yet again proved to be apt in transitioning. Since his early days as president of the Australia conference, he had been concerned with the spirituality of the workers. He formed the Ministerial Association and published the Ministry Magazine. This magazine is still in publication today and continues to be a resource for ministers around the globe. Daniells yet again proved that passing the torch to a successor does not mean the end of a leader's ministry and influence.

Elder Daniells' understanding of the interim nature of his position was clear in his mind. He was always cognizant of the need to prepare for succession. In a letter dated May 31, 1901, during his first year in office as president of the General Conference, he wrote to Elder W. C. White:

You know something of the trying position I am in, and the dangers that beset my path. I have accepted this position because I believe it was my duty; otherwise, I would have packed my trunk and gone as quickly as possible to some distant land. I do not believe the Lord has called me into this present position I am in, to fill my heart with sorrow and trouble, and wreck me physically and spiritually. I do not propose to have any such results. When I cannot remain in peace, and with the joy of the Lord filling my heart, I shall turn my part over to some one else, and depart in peace.¹²

He never believed that he would stay in his position for ever. Nor did he believe that ministry would end when someone else succeeded him.

¹² Box 1, Field 12, A. G. Daniells (Collection 227), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI. Letter to EGW, July 1, 1901.

Financial Cost of not Having a Leadership Transition and Succession Plan

Without a succession plan, there can be grave difficulties finding successors at times and this is very costly for the denomination. Many church institutions spend lots of money trying to find presidents during transitions when there are no succession plans. They end up passing months without a leader while a search committee is appointed to do diligent searching. At times, several church institutions, unions, conferences and churches are without presidents or pastors because there was no leadership transition plan in place. Weese and Crabtree have demonstrated that it is very costly financially and otherwise not to have a transition plan. For institutions, “it is accepted as an industry standard that the cost of replacing a professional is roughly equivalent to the annual salary of the position.”¹³ The cost to the local church is even greater and leads to a decrease in attendance. “The worship attendance typically drops about fifteen percent when an effective pastor leaves, since resident associate pastors or an interim pastor are rarely as strong in leading worship as the pastor who has just departed from the church.”¹⁴ There is also the cost in decreased financial contributions as well as emotional and natural cost. “The collateral impact on other staff members can be substantial.”¹⁵ There is also the inestimable cost on the damaging impact on morale and on the spiritual function of the church or institution.

Because no transition plan is in place, lay leaders have to create a plan at the same time they are implementing it and trying to manage the general issues of the church board work . . . Attention is diverted from strategic thinking that is essential in such a transition to managing crisis. The tyranny of the urgent

¹³ Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Cabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 30.

¹⁴ Weese and Cabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 30.

¹⁵ Weese and Cabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 31,

consumes the precious time of leaders who ought to be involved with planning the work of transition and working that plan.¹⁶

In 1901, Elder Daniells had to reluctantly function as Union president while running the urgent affairs of the General Conference. He wrote to his friend White,

I am so sorry that I have to act as president of the Lake Union Conference. I have looked the country over time and again since the General Conference for someone to take this position, but I cannot find any one that I feel clear to recommend to the brethren. They insist that I shall retain my position until the machinery is running properly, and a suitable or capable man can be secured. It must be a man of broad plans and lots of energy. The state Conferences are fearfully run down. They must be rejuvenated through and through.¹⁷

Without a pastoral leadership succession plan, leaders at all levels of the church will continue to relive what elder Daniells experienced 115 years ago.

Post General Conference Presidency Years

After he left the General Conference, Daniells transitioned into other positions and served the church faithfully until his death. About Daniells, Elder Watson, who was president of the General Conference at the time of Daniells' death proclaimed: "With great humility of heart he prepared for his own end."¹⁸ "Under his inspiring leadership the work was advanced from country to country, till its lines were extended to every shore. His faith caught a vision of increasing forces of trained workers in every division of the world field, and he gave himself unselfishly to the training of men for every position and every task."¹⁹

¹⁶ Weese and Cabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 32.

¹⁷ Box 1, Field 12, A. G. Daniells.

¹⁸ Watson, "Comfort in Sorrow."

¹⁹ Watson, "Comfort in Sorrow."

A Concluding Note and Lesson of Daniels: Leadership and Transitions

Elder Watson statement about the leadership of A. G. Daniells' leadership very much expressed the truth about a leader who trained others to succeed him when no one spoke of succession. Daniells was comfortable with his limitations. He was reluctant to accept the position of top leader of the church, but he believed it was his duty to accept because his church needed his service. He served twenty-one years as General Conference president and presided over his own succession when his secretary, Elder Spicer, became president, and Daniells stayed on as the executive secretary. He transitioned to second in command and served his president for four years. Therefore, we conclude that his leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was historically foundational for pastoral leadership transition and succession in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Indeed, as Watson said of Daniells: "He won our confidence and was given our hearts' whole trust. He led us long, but never once did he swerve from the faith he received into his heart as a boy and never once did he betray us. He bore heavy burdens, and carried great responsibilities, but never once did his life and leadership mar the movement of which he was so long the human head."²⁰

Pastoral/Leadership Transitions in Protestant Denominations

Pastoral/leadership transitions vary, if there is such a tradition at all, in most Protestant denominations. There is not much literature available that discusses such transitions. That which is available, for the most part, comes from polity within the respective denominations. The remainder of this unit will explore several denominational

²⁰ Watson, "Comfort in Sorrow."

responses to change-of-pastor transitions in the Methodist, Disciples of Christ, and the Baptist Churches.

The United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church is a church with a rich history and has an episcopal form of church polity and leadership. John Wesley is the principle pioneer of American Methodism even though “Methodism was a movement within the Church of England.”²¹ The leadership of the United Methodist Church begins with bishops. A process for electing bishops takes place every four years and takes place at a Jurisdictional Conference. Bishops, which are elected for life, are then assigned to an episcopal area and serve a conference (sometimes more than one, but rarely).

Part of the work of the bishop is assigning pastors to churches. In this episcopal form of church governance/polity, each conference has a number of district superintendents, chosen alone by the bishop, who works with the bishop and are each assigned over a (geographic) district with a number of churches. Changes in pastor appointments arise through a discussion among the district superintendent, pastor and the Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC). Changes first come about when the PPRC requests a change, the pastor requests a change, the district superintendent requests a change or the bishop does so. This subject matter falls under the topic of “appointment making.”

Clergy shall be appointed by the bishop, who is empowered to make and fix all appointments in the Episcopal area of which the annual conference is a part. Appointments are to be made with consideration of the gifts and evidence of God’s

²¹ *The United Methodist Church Book of Discipline 2012*, ed. Neil M. Alexander (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 55.

grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of congregations and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itineracy.²²

The process begins about several months before the Annual Conference. The cabinet (which consists of the bishops and district superintendents) processes where pastoral changes should be made. Through a process of discernment, the decisions for pastoral changes are made. The district superintendent then consults with the PPRC of the church informing them as well as informing the incoming and outgoing pastors of the move. A covenant meeting is then held with the incoming pastor and the PPRC of the change in appointment. The PPRC has the responsibility of preparing for any celebrations of incoming and outgoing pastors. The PPRC is also charged with the responsibility of giving a briefing of the church's ministries to the incoming pastor. *The United Methodist Book of Worship* has an "order of service" acknowledging changes in pastoral appointments. They are entitled "An Order for the Celebration of an Appointment" and "An Order of Farewell to a Pastor."²³ The practices of "farewell" and "reception" are not always carried out. It is at the discretion of the lay leadership of the church whether or not this is done.

The Disciples of Christ

The Disciples of Christ is another denomination that is at heart a congregational type of church even though it has central offices to help facilitate the church's work.

Founders of the Disciples Movement developed their notions of ministry out of their disdain for a dominating clergy, their distrust of authority, and their firm belief in the concept of congregational freedom. From the authority received

²² *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*, 425.

²³ *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, ed. Neil Alexander (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 595-599.

through Christ, each congregation was empowered to ordain and employ persons for pastoral leadership.²⁴

Though this seemed practical at the time of the church's birth, some changes came about over the last fifty years concerning the individual church's autonomy.

With passing decades, the need for responsible clergy prompted the gradual development of a professional Disciples ministry that had satisfied the requirements of a specialized theological education and a specific set of qualifications for ordination. Through the process of restructure, a set of guidelines entitled *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry* was developed in 1971 for the church as a whole. Regions authorize ordination and certify the standing of ministers, while congregations retain the right to call their ministers and assume the responsibility to sustain them in faithfulness and honor.²⁵

The Disciples as a denomination also have in place some tools to assist pastors and congregations in changing appointments regardless of the reasons. One such resource is the guideline *Closing a Pastoral Ministry*. This guideline offers points in "Farewell Liturgy," "Covenant of Closure," "Covenant with the Interim Minister" and "Covenant for a New Ministry When the Previous Minister is Remaining in the Community."²⁶ Much of this work is facilitated by the denomination's Regional Minister, which serves in a similar capacity of the United Methodist Church's district superintendent, even though there is no episcopal appointment here. The Disciples Church also has a "Code of Ethics" for ministers who are transitioning appointments.

²⁴ D. Duane Cummins, *A Handbook for Today's Disciples in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (Saint Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2010), 64-65.

²⁵ Cummins, *A Handbook for Today's Disciples in the Christian Church*, 64-65.

²⁶ *Closing a Pastoral Ministry: A Document of The General Commission on Ministry*, Office of Search and Call, Disciples Home Missions, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), accessed January 4, 2017, http://disciples.org/wp-cpmtemt/uploads/2015/04/Closing_A_Pastoral_Ministry.pdf.

The Baptist Church

It has been joked, unflattering I might add, “Where there are two Baptists, there are at least three opinions.”²⁷ I say this not in scorn or as a put down; rather, it is to highlight the fact that one of the things that Baptists pride themselves on is autonomy and that no outside group or individual dictates to the way it operates as a church.²⁸

Baptists began and continue as a Christian communion grounded in a radical congregational polity. They are ever struggling with the tension between individual autonomy and corporate connectionalism. In a sense, Baptists are a people’s movement, at the center of the so-called Free Church tradition. Their congregations move across a spectrum that runs from rabid localism and individualism to varying degrees of communal and denominational conformity. Their system of ecclesiastical order creates a dramatic sense of freedom for individuals and churches to determine their own directions, yet such populism ensures dissent, disagreement, and the potential for schism at every turn.²⁹

Notwithstanding the Baptist church individualism as a congregation, it has a number of conventions – the Southern Baptist Convention being the largest, as well as a number of state conventions. This denomination has a mission arm for the support of evangelism around the world as well as mission in the context of relief overseas. As for pastoral transitions, this work comes out of the church membership by a vote usually facilitated by a pulpit committee. When a pastor leaves, whether he is dismissed or chooses to leave for another church or employment elsewhere, a pulpit committee is formed by the deacons for the purpose of putting in place a job description for a new pastor, receiving applications, and setting up invitations for a select few to come and preach. Once this committee decides on two persons, they refer this information to the deacons who in turn

²⁷ Bill Leonard, *Baptist in America* The Columbia Contemporary American Religious Series (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), 129.

²⁸ Leonard, *Baptist in America*, 153.

²⁹ Leonard, *Baptist in America*, 153.

set up a church meeting for the purpose of choosing one of the two to be voted on by the congregation.

Even though there are no definitive guideline to assist in receiving a new pastor from the denomination, some state conventions and Baptist ministers/professors have written booklets to assist churches in this regard. Interestingly, many of these booklets are quite detailed with many steps that the pulpit committee should go through to assist them in this process. Yet, very little is said about how the church should respond to receiving the pastor and his family. Nothing is said in most of these guidelines about how to celebrate the work of the departing minister and family. Tom Owens, in his book *The Work of the Pastor Search Committee*, asserts that the church should work with the incoming pastor on a “Transition Schedule.” This includes compensation for moving, caring for needs at the parsonage and working with a hospitality group to provide food during the first days of unpacking.³⁰ The pulpit committee should “Work with the new pastor to plan the first Sunday. An installation service recognizing the new pastor and his family is always appropriate.”³¹ Beyond this, the literature is scarce about any processes of how to go about or who is responsible for updating the incoming minister on the vision and ministries of the church.

Conclusion

Considering the fact that ministers, in all probability, come and go every week in some church in some community, there should be some body of literature on this subject

³⁰ Tom Owens, *The Work of a Pastor Search Committee* (Cushing, OK: Cimarron Baptist Association, 2003), 26.

³¹ Owens, *The Work of a Pastor Search Committee*, 27.

that details the reasons that ministers leave their charge. Numbered among the reasons are retirement, health disabilities, returning to school, financial upward mobility and the minister feels that his or her ministry is completed in this particular charge. Other reasons for ministers moving are decisions made by a diocese or bishop's office as well as the church membership demanding a change, being it a congregational system or otherwise, because of problems or ethical issues with the pastor. Either way, there are reasons behind changes in pastoral leadership. It would seem as if denominational executives or professors would have published a body of literature on this subject detailing the reasons for moves as well as how the church may suffer if changes and transitions are not handled in a professional manner and in a spirit of care. As pointed out earlier in this document, pastors and their families can leave the church scarred by the way the change was handled. The church, too, can be scarred by such changes – not to mention there is the reality that worship attendance along with the offering can suffer a decline.

For good or bad, changes do, must and will continue to come about in pastoral leadership. The church would be well served to have in place literature to assist them in how to go about transitions paying close attention to how such a change affects the outgoing pastor, the incoming pastor (and their families) and the congregation.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The omnipresence of God throughout the history of humanity and in the life of the church is the overarching theological theme of this project. Whether it is Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Peter, Paul, James, John or any leader of our time, all human leaders and pastors will come and go, but God will always be there with the church community. This foundational unit will investigate the implications of God's omnipresence as it relates to this project. Leadership transition has a lot to do with faith. This includes the faith of both departing and incoming leaders in God and in the church system. How is faith affected by a failed transition? Attention will be given to Karl Barth "Christocentric method," reaching essence through the cross. One will see that through the Old Testament and the New Testament, healthy transitional periods testified to the need for God's continued presence in the affairs of the community. We will offer a few examples that showcase God's omnipresence and demonstrate that He is never taken by surprise. Throughout history, terribly bad crisis transitions were endured and overcome by communities of faith because God had not abandoned His people. This unit will also look at the ecclesiology through the lens of the work of Christ as it relates to the mission and ministry of the church. After our analysis of these theological themes and their

relationship to pastoral leadership transition, we will conclude with the offering of our own theology of pastoral leadership transition in the context of the Christian church.

There are countless models of very effective business transitions that will not necessarily work in the church context because the church is about God and the workings of God in the lives of the church members. The main purpose of successful businesses is profit. Successful church leadership transition assures the continuity of the working of God in the lives of the members individually and the intervention of God in the life of the church collectively. Vanderbloemen and Bird rightly understand that “God’s church depends far more on the Great Shepherd than the human under shepherd (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Any church’s future depends ultimately on God far more than the coming and going of human leadership.”¹

The abiding presence of God in the life of the church is the constant compass that will lead the church through transitions that at times may be stormy. In John 8, the Jewish leaders wanted to affirm their allegiance and loyalty to Abraham as their father by refuting the evident messianic appeal of Christ. Jesus offered them freedom and they claimed that as children of Abraham they were not slaves but freemen and therefore did not need the freedom he offered. “Our only father,” they said “is God Himself” (John 8:41). Jesus responded that their actions showed that they were rather the children of the Devil. They in turn increased the heat by claiming that Jesus was a “Samaritan and demon possessed” (John 8:48). “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste

¹ William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession that Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2014), 24.

death. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" (John 8:52-53). The dialogue ended when Jesus said "before Abraham was, I Am". That statement was overwhelming for Jesus' interlocutors. They could not avoid the parallelism, similarity and reference to Exodus 3:14 when "God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

Karl Barth's Theology of Christocentric Method

The Word of God is central to Barth's theology. In fact, Barth would argue that there is no theology without Christ. Colm O'Grady accurately describe Karl Barth position when he wrote that in fact

Theology is Christology. The Word of God which creates the *analogia fidei*, and with it the reality and possibility of theology, became more and more for Barth a spatio-temporal event which he identified with Jesus Christ. The Word was made flesh - *Verbum caro factum est*. Theology became Christology.²

Some claim that Barth's theology implies that we do not need to try to live a life of obedience. We do not share this evaluation of Barth's Christocentric theology. Barth in our view wrote about the omnipresence and the omnipotence of God and the fact that we could not do good in and of ourselves. This is not permissiveness but an acknowledgement of our total dependency on God. As Barth puts it:

It is God Himself who opens our eyes and ears for Himself. And in so doing He tells us that we could not do it for ourselves; that of ourselves, we are blind and deaf. To receive the Holy Spirit means an exposure of our spiritual blindness, a recognition that we do not possess the Holy Spirit. For that reason, the subjective reality of revelation has the distinctive character of a miracle, i.e., it is reality to

² Colm O'Grady, *A Survey of the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York, NY: Corpus Instrumentorum, Inc., 1970), 15.

be grounded only in itself. In the actual subjective reality of revelation, it is finally decided that apart from it there is no other possibility of being free for God.³

The Word is essential. “The revelation of the Word, and in the revelation the Word itself, comes into the world. Not known by the World, not accepted by those to whom it originally applies, it is still mighty and victorious, it still creates its own hearers and recipients, because it is the Word, God’s Word.”⁴ We concur with Barth in saying “The Word speaks, the Word acts, the Word reveals, the Word redeems.”⁵ The Word is God incarnate and therefore encompasses two natures. God became flesh, came and lived among us and died. Barth Hunsinger explains,

accepts the full historicity of Christ’s resurrection, he put the accent in another place. He does not allow the question of historicity (a peculiar modern obsession) to obscure the resurrection’s chief theological significance. Christ’s resurrection means, above all, that the reconciliation Christ accomplished enjoys eternal reality and significance.⁶

The reconciliation was possible in the name of Jesus, the Word, the son of God. According to Hunsinger, Barth drew the conclusion that the name of Jesus, “is not a system representing a unified experience or a unified thought; it is the Word of God itself.” (CD I/1, p. 181).⁷ “Hidden in their being, both God and humanity are revealed . . . not in themselves, not directly . . . but in the Word of God in Jesus Christ. Without ceasing to be a mystery, they are an open mystery in Christ; imperceptible and

³ CD I/2:25-44 as quoted by Kurt Anders Richardson. *Reading Karl Barth: New Directions for North American Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group), 2004.

⁴ Karl Barth, *Witness to the Word: A Commentary on John*, ed. Walther First, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 85.

⁵ Barth, *Witness to the Word*, 91.

⁶ John Webster, *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 138.

⁷ Webster, *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, 31.

incomprehensible in their essence, yet perceptible and comprehensible in their work.”

Karl Barth, CD, III/4, 24.

The Omnipresence of God

The church exists for the glory of God and the edification of the saints. The omnipresence of God is the only guarantee of deep-in-the-soul meaning for every believer and minister. Human beings, no matter how talented, are temporal and mortal. A pastor who is not comfortable with his or her mortality will have a harder time preparing his or her church for the time when he or she is no longer around whether by transfer, retirement or death. God, however, will always be there with the church and for the people. Moses had it right in stating, “Lord thou has been our dwelling place. Before the mountains were brought forth or the worlds were made, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God”⁸

The assurance of God’s abiding presence is central in planning effective and smooth pastoral leadership transitions. Members and pastors realize that members come and members go; pastors also come and go. Leaders come and leaders go. God is the only “I Am”. God is the “ever present help in time of trouble,” including during leadership transition. God has called and will call people to plant churches, develop, to nourish and grow ministries. A minister may be in a church for a short or long tenure, but it is all about God. In all cases, both predecessor and successor need to approach transition from the standpoint of faith. They must have faith that the Omnipresent God will continue to lead the church or institution as he has in the past. Following is how Robinson explains it:

⁸ Psalm 19:1.

At its core the excellence of faith can be defined as accepting that God's will and way are in our best interest, despite rational claims, empirical data, and societal standards that might suggest otherwise. Faith, the hand of grace is extended to us, and we are moved to take hold of that hand and trust the integrity and reality of the covenant established in that moment. Christian faith acknowledges that God is both the source and the goal of our faith, the alpha and the omega of our spiritual journey.⁹

Barth understood that the presence of God is manifested in the actual presence of Jesus living on earth among men. He said that,

In Jesus Christ, 'God himself in person is the subject of a real actualized [*wirklichen*] human being and acting' (I/2, 151). In Jesus Christ, God and humanity 'live together . . . in the indestructible conjunction of the differentiated act in which both Creator and creature exist' (IV/ 3.1, 40).¹⁰

William Stacy Johnson concluded that "Barth conceptualizes the Christian life as a dynamic movement of justification, sanctification and vocation... Barth presents the Christian life as a tensive and open-ended existence lived out primarily in the mode of hope. The Christian life is never something self-evident but always something received in the form of an enigma and task."¹¹

The presence of God manifested through Christ, Emmanuel, continued through the Holy Spirit as Jesus promises in John 14 and 15 in the Farewell Discourse.

The work of the Son of God includes the work of the Father as its presupposition and the work of the Holy Spirit as its consequence. The first article is to a certain extent the source, the third article the goal of our path. But the second article is the way upon which we find ourselves in faith. From that vantage we may review the entire fullness of the acts of God.

⁹ Elaine Robinson, *These Three: The Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Love* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 68.

¹⁰ William Stacy Johnson, *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 101.

¹¹ Johnson. *The Mystery of God*, 125.

Hence, a careful look at the farewell discourse of Jesus to his disciples speaks to the nature of a transition in that Jesus is going away.

Omnipresence Not Pantheism

In our Old Testament foundation text, Moses reminded the people during the transition and installation of Joshua that “the Lord your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you... The Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” And then he told Joshua “The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”¹² Moses saw a God who was ever actively present in leading his people through the transitions of life. God will lead you, go before you and never leave you. Pantheism sees God as one with the material world. For Pantheist as, Wayne Grudem puts it: “God is everything that exist.”¹³ “Everything in the whole universe is God, or is part of God.”¹⁴ God they claim is the universe. He is the matter. And the matter is God. Reymand Hutabarat, in the article “The Omnipresence and the Transcendence of God: A presponse to the Pantheistic view of God’s Presence in the Universe,” notes that “the presence of God, for pantheism, is limited to the universe. The biblical account shows that God is not limited by space and cannot be contained by any

¹² Deuteronomy 31:3-8.

¹³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 208.

¹⁴ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 208.

space.”¹⁵ Fagg describe God’s omnipresence through immanence and transcendence. They are “roughly define poles of a seamless continuum descriptive of our sense of universal divine presence.”¹⁶ Hutarat argues that “God is present everywhere in his creation, but that He is distinct from His creation.”¹⁷ Using the analogy of a sponge filled with water, he correctly concluded that “water is present everywhere in the sponge, but the water is completely distinct from the sponge. The water exists separately from the sponge and vice versa.”¹⁸ The continual presence of God in the life of the church during leadership transition is the comforting reality that the Almighty and everlasting God will not abandoned the church when a pastor leaves. God will be present with the church, but God is not the pews. God is not the offering plates. God is not the brick and mortar. He is active in the lives of the members and the pastors as they go through the challenges that come with transition.

Clark and Geisler have identified several common threads of pantheists’ views.

Following are seven of them.

1. Oneness of reality. All pantheists agree that reality is one
2. The independence of God. Pantheists generally assert that the highest reality is in no way dependent. Everything else depends on God; God depends on nothing.
3. God is impersonal. Although theists may agree with pantheists on God’s

¹⁵ Raymand Hutarat. “The Omnipresence and The Transcendence of God: A Presponse to the Pantheistic View of God’s Presence in the Universe.” *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 13, no. 1 (July 2010): 73. accessed January 15, 2016. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

¹⁶ Lawrence A. Fagg. “Physical Pointers to God’s Omnipresence: Do Immanence and Transcendence Coalesce?” *Theology & Science* 6, no. 4 (November 2008): 365. accessed January 15, 2016. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

¹⁷ Lawrence A. Fagg. “Physical Pointers to God’s Omnipresence: Do Immanence and Transcendence Coalesce?” *Theology & Science* 6, no. 4 (November 2008): 365. accessed January 15, 2016. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

¹⁸ Lawrence A. Fagg. “Physical Pointers to God’s Omnipresence: Do Immanence and Transcendence Coalesce?” *Theology & Science* 6, no. 4 (November 2008): 74. accessed January 15, 2016. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

- independence, the two positions differ significantly on the personhood of God.
4. Necessary creation. While pantheists and theists both speak of creation, they mean quite different things by the concept. Pantheists view creation as a necessary event that occur because it is God's very nature to do it.
 5. Creation out of God. In contrast to theists, who believe in creation out of nothing (ex nihilo), pantheists hold that creation is out of God (ex Dei). The universe is of the same substance as God. In fact, it is God.
 6. The divinity of humans. Pantheists naturally argue that every aspect of finite existence is an expression or extension of the divine.
 7. The world as a lower level of reality. Though critics sometimes contend that pantheism claims the world does not exist, this does not apply to all pantheists.
 8. Levels of reality as perceptual ignorance.¹⁹

When Moses reminded the people that God would go before them. He was reassuring them that they would not be left alone. The fact was that he was not going to be able to lead them into the Promised Land. Joshua was going to be there with them, but the grieving people needed to know that God was the one constant presence in their journey to the Promised Land. Equating God with nature, the terrain they needed to subdue would hardly have brought comfort to their grieving, depressed souls.

Pantheism Crisis in Adventist History

The Seventh-day Adventist Church faced a very serious existential threat from pantheistic theology early in its history. The crisis involved Dr. J. H. Kellogg, one of the most prominent leaders of the church. Kellogg believed that

God was physically in every object that exists, animate and inanimate. He illustrates his concept in nature as follows; 'God is the explanation of nature, not a god outside of nature, but in nature, manifesting himself through and in all objects, movements and varied phenomena of the universe.'²⁰

¹⁹ David K. Clark and Norman L. Geisler, *Apologetics in the New Age: A Christian Critique of Pantheism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 118-120.

²⁰ Kenneth B. Stout. *The Threat of Pantheism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. Unpublished paper document 013485, page 4. Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

Kellogg's views were presented in a book, *Living Temple*, and in many lectures. He argued that God is not just nature animate and inanimate, but that since the body is God's temple, "God dwells literally within man."²¹ He wrote in page fifty-two of *Living*

Temple:

We have physiological proof of the existence within the body of some power superior to the material composition or substance of the body, which exercises a constant supervision and control whereby individual identity is maintained. This can be nothing less than the power which builds, which creates, it is God himself, the Divine Presence in the temple.²²

Ellen White, among others, strongly advised Kellogg in 1892 before the publication of the book that he was on the wrong path. She wrote to Kellogg in April 1892 that,

I feel that you are in danger. I had so hoped and believed that the Lord in his mercy and love to you had given you a clearer insight into His character and that of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, so that by his Grace your feet would be planted upon the solid rock.²³

Richard Bruce Pittack reported, "Dr. Kellogg would lean too far in the direction away from the concept of inherent power in nature and toward the pantheistic idea that God pervade nature. That is, God is in nature and therefore – God and nature are identical."²⁴

In 1897, during an address of the General Conference, Stan Aufdemberg reports that Kellogg declared that the gravitation force, "which holds all things together, that is

²¹ Kenneth B. Stout. *The Threat of Pantheism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. Unpublished paper document 013485, page 5. Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

²² J. H. Kellogg, *The Living Temple* (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health Publishing Company, 1903), 52.

²³ Ellen G. White, Letter sent to Dr. J. H. Kellogg from Australia, April 15, 1892. Document File K-15-92.

²⁴ Richard B. Pittack, *The Pantheistic Crisis in the S.D.A. Church History*. White Estate WDF 15-a #2, page 3. Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

everywhere present, that thrills throughout the whole universe, that acts instantaneously through boundless space, can be nothing else than God himself. What a wonderful thought that this same God is in us and in everything.”²⁵ He was a very influential and respected physician and leader of the church. His views had great influence on others. For several years, the church leaders, Elder Daniells and Ellen White, in particular, would advise him in private through several letters to abandon his pantheistic views. Even after they were presented at General Conference meetings, they continued to counsel him to forsake pantheistic views in private letters. It was not until the publication of the book *Living Temple* that the private letters were made public. Ellen White called Kellogg’s pantheistic views “sophistries of the enemy.”²⁶ White in 1904 shared with Kellogg a message from God to her saying that

the sentiments that you have received in harmony with the special theories presented in the book ‘Living Temple’ are not pure truth. There is a comingling of truth and error, and it will be difficult for you to single out the truth from the false, to distinguish between the threads of truth and the threads of error... Separate entirely from the bewitching, misleading sentiments that run through ‘Living Temple.’²⁷

This statement describes accurately the 568 pages of *The Living Temple*. Most of the pages are good, scientific and Bible-based evidence of the wonders of God’s creation. But buried in the pages are tenets of pantheism.

²⁵ Stan Aufdemberg, *John Harvey Kellogg and Pantheism*. Unpublished paper document 011900, page 3. Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

²⁶ The Center for Adventist Research requires citation as follow: Ellen White. Letter 237, 1904 (July 14, 1904) Relation of “Living Temple” and Foundation Truths. White Estate WDF 15 #3. Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

²⁷ The Center for Adventist Research requires citation as follow: Ellen White. Letter 237, 1904 (July 14, 1904) Relation of “Living Temple” and Foundation Truths. White Estate WDF 15 #2. Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

Pastor as Theologian

One of the many facets of the work of a minister is that of a theologian. For sure, many denominations and church traditions require seminary training as a prerequisite for ordination and serving a church as a senior pastor. This is especially true in mainline Protestant denominations. There was a time when this was not the case. The early universities in this country had a seminary component to it that was later changed in name to religious studies department. This came with little oversight by denomination leadership. Today, seminary training affords the student an opportunity to study many disciplines, thus making him or her more proficient in serving the church. Sadly, there is a disconnect when it comes to the minister seeing himself or herself as a theologian.

In reality there is not a dimension of the pastor's calling that is not deeply, inherently and inescapable theological. The pastor will encounter no problem in counselling that is not specifically theological in character. There is no major question in ministry that does not come with deep theological dimensions and the need for careful theological application. The task of leading, feeding, and guiding the congregation is as theological as any other vocation conceivable.²⁸

This should include the pastor/theologian teaching the church the relevance of changes in pastoral appointment and the reminder that people of faith, though attached and endeared to a pastor and his/her family, have as their foremost understanding that it is Jesus that we trust and follow with undying allegiance.

The outgoing pastor must not discount in her role as teacher the importance of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) being active in pastoral changes. Theology is rooted in interpretation of biblical texts. An illustration of this follows. "The Spirit has the divine attribute of omnipresence (Ps 139:7) and guides the believer (Ps 143:10). Looking

²⁸ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "The Pastor as Theologian," in *A Theology of the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville, TN: Publishing Group, 2004), 724.

forward to regeneration from an attitude of brokenness, David begs God not to withdraw his Spirit but to ‘renew’ and sustain his spirit.”²⁹ Though David’s brokenness was rooted in a sinful act, this text and backdrop nonetheless helps a broken community to see that God’s Spirit is still operative to those that seek him. This enables both the pastor (and family) and the congregation to move through some of this brokenness from a context of faith in God.

The Pastor as a Servant and not the Christ

Presently in the church today, there is too much of energy directed at the personality of the pastor and the lay leadership. Many lay people join the church because of the personality of the pastor – whether he or she is gifted or not. Many pastors run the risk of manipulating members into doing what they want. Sometimes this is for the wrong reason. For sure, pastors want the members of the church to be active; yet, there is a danger in terms of the members becoming more enamored to the pastor than to Christ and the church, a representative of his body in the church. It then behooves the minister to put into perspective all of the seminary and workshop training on, as Dale Carnegie would say, “how to win friends and influence people.” This work of the pastor that goes unchecked may lead to a cult-like ministry. Most experts who study church growth and other patterns point out that a long tenure of a pastor lends itself to a better forecast of church growth. There is something to be said about this continuity. Yet, it can be fraught with danger when the pastor’s focus is more on himself or herself than Christ.

²⁹ Malcolm B. Yarnell, III, “The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit,” in *A Theology of the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville, TN: Publishing Group, 2004), 724.

The apostle Paul has much to say to both the clergy and the laity as it relates to a healthy understanding of what the work of ministry is all about. The church is “that what characterizes the Christian mystery, the revelation of the fact that God communicates himself to humanity through man, through human life.”³⁰ The letter that Paul wrote to the Christians of Ephesus speaks volume to the pastor who lives and serves as a servant of Christ. Paul wrote, “I, who am less than the least of all God’s holy people, have been entrusted with this special grace, of proclaiming to the gentiles the unfathomable treasure of Christ and of throwing light on the inner workings of the mystery kept hidden through all the ages in God, the Creator of everything” (Eph 3:8-9). The preacher runs a danger in thinking that he or she is the architect of the work of the church. “The Corinthians said of him that he wrote ‘powerful’ letters from a distance, but when he came himself, there was nothing to him. So he had no special aptitude for his work – rather the reverse. *Minimo* – less than the least; he might well wonder why God had chosen him.”³¹ This theme of “why God has chosen me” can be healthy and helpful when kept in its proper portion. When the pastor acknowledges his unworthiness and makes Christ the center of the life of the church, he can accomplish much and model discipleship for others.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

The laity – and its leadership in particular – has to also keep in perspective the proper role they play in leadership and realize that they too are servant leaders. Church

³⁰ Luigi Giussani and Viviane Hewitt, *Why the Church*, Montreal: MQUP, 2001 (124). eBook Collection. accessed January 6, 2017. (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost.

³¹ Luigi Giussani and Viviane Hewitt, *Why the Church*, Montreal: MQUP, 2001 (125). eBook Collection. accessed January 6, 2017. (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost.

transition is a time that the lay leadership should be modeling what it means to be mindful of the healthy attitude that ministers come and go, and so do laity; yet, the main purpose for the church to exist is to embody the teachings of Christ in a great fellowship that should be energized to evangelize and engage in mission of outreach both locally and globally. The church is,

stuck in the past. The leadership and the controlling groups of the church have developed barriers of protection to insulate the church and what they are finding is they have isolated it. The church has lost touch with its mission of seeking and saving the lost. Now the focus is, 'how much does it cost?' The church needs to find its spiritual compass for reaching people and making an eternal difference in the world. Throughout the Bible God utilizes different methods of impacting people with His message of hope and redemption by assessing their need and finding a way to meet it."³²

Any changes in pastoral leadership must be handled in a way that the church does not lose sight of its reasons for existence and its work.

Ecclesiology: The Work of the Church

The work of the church is too important to get side tracked by changes in pastoral appointments or hires or power struggle among the laity. The gospel must be preached and taught, the elderly and infirmed must be cared for, the building must be maintained, the Christian education program must be functioning properly, and the stewardship of the church must be a constant subject along with the proper care of the finances. Also, the children and the youth must be cared for and guided. The church must be moving forward in all of these areas; and this is just the institutional care and maintenance of a

³² Keith R. Gardner, "Effective Transitional Ministry Plan: Pastoral Leadership in the Twenty-First Century Church," Doctoral Thesis, 57, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, September 2012, accessed January 6, 2017, <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1666&context=doctoral>.

congregation. Beyond this, the church must be active in its immediate community in ministries of outreach. This means that the church should be a part of, or support, institutions such as food pantries, clothing ministries and local agencies that seek to tackle problems of education, violence, and charities that provide assistance. This may include support for groups like Habitat for Humanity, an organization that builds houses for low income and disable persons. The church involvement may also include participation in an ecumenical organization which often sponsors activities of prayer and service. The church must not expend too much energy on pastors coming and going and strive to strengthen its ministries as faithful servants of Christ. This can be done only through building and strengthening strong leaders in the church.

When the subject of leadership comes up, churches often looked for people in high-power secular jobs and/or people of means (wealth) and influence. The church often miscalculates the breadth of types of leaders and suffers to some extent. James W. Holsinger speaks of several different types of leaders: “Missional leadership, inspirational leadership, transformational leadership, or situational leadership.”³³ The church’s understanding of models of leadership is critical in helping to shepherd the flock in a fruitful ministry. For the most part, a congregation is either moving forward or regressing. Rarely does it stay at one place for a long period of time. Hence, the ability of the church leadership, with its understanding and employing aspects of different models of leadership, can effectively help the members of the congregation to see that it is the

³³ James W. Holsinger, *How to Develop Lay Ministry Within a Local Church: Enlarging Personal Faith Through Christian Leadership* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 51.

ministry of the church that is of most importance and not who the pastor is – or who is in positions of lay leadership.

The church would benefit from an ecclesiology-oriented mission statement that highlights the work of Christ in his preaching/teaching, healing, fellowship, and his suffering and dying which led to redeeming people from the clutch of sin and the newness of life. This undertaking has at its center the work of discipleship and evangelism. The ministry of discipleship begins with teaching the tenets of the faith. There are many books that deal with stages of faith development. When one is concentrated on growing and developing in Christ, one is not easily sidetracked by who the pastor and church lay leader is. This does not mean that one should not be saddened by a departure of a pastor; rather, such departure is put into context in that all persons, lay and clergy alike, are called to a life of not only worship but servitude, and sometimes that service takes us to different places.

Transitional Minister and Ministry as a Focus

Lastly, there is something to be said about a time of transition being a time for reflection on the church's ministry with a transitional minister at the helm. The benefit of a transitional minister is to help the church refocus on its ministry without having to worry about whether or not the new minister will discontinue some present ministries or make wholesale changes in leadership positions in the church. This can be a time for revisiting the church's mission statement, ministries and priorities. A transitional minister can serve by being able to help the church take a critical look at itself even if it involves persons getting their feelings hurt. The minister has no petty agenda nor will he or she try

to ingratiate himself or herself to the members. Conflicts can be named and work can take place to address them. Ministries that are faltering need to be evaluate to see if they should be discontinued or whether more resources should be directed to them. A discussion can take place about emerging ministries and when they can be launched and funded. And attention can be made to what qualities (strengths) that a new pastor would possess. An interim-period of time between two permanent pastors can be very helpful to a congregation, especially one that has experienced conflict.

Conclusion: The Pilgrim Motif

The minister is a pilgrim. From the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to Moses and the children of Israel in Egypt and through the years in the desert, to the time of Christ and the apostles after his death and all the way to the twenty first Century, the idea that we are pilgrims passing through has kept God's people hopeful in times of transition and has prepared generations of believers to deal with changes. This is why every denomination, every ecclesiastical organization and every congregation needs a transition/succession plan. The transition plan must therefore be theologically grounded on the assurance of God's constant presence with the congregation. During the Moses-Joshua transition and others after it, God's omnipresence was assured. Verses 16 and 17 of Numbers 27 prove that Moses understood that when he wrote: "May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all leaving things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." The writer of this paper shares Vanderbloemen and Bird's theology that "God is never caught by surprise. If you're the

pastor, God is preparing you – for your arrival at a church, for your departure, and for your successor. After all, every pastor is an interim pastor of some sort.”³⁴ Miller is on point in his understanding of the theology of transition. He was commenting on the Deuteronomy 31:1-8:

The community is first given divine assurance that they will not be abandoned and that the Lord will go with them. That word needs to be said first, and it is said at some length in verses 3-6. The text accentuates, therefore, what the story has revealed over and over again: The guidance and sustenance the people have received has its source in the Lord. The first word is not an appointment of a new leader but the Lord’s own assurance that the primary pattern of the past will continue: God will be there will you and will deliver you. Without the power of God at work, the question of a new human leader is moot – as the story will demonstrate repeatedly.³⁵

Regardless of the church’s governance of episcopal appointment or congregational vote when it comes to who serves as pastor, the church is not left to its own device totally in how people should be treated. The church has also on its side, should it use it, history and tradition that aid in times of departure and arrival of pastoral leadership transitions in the life of the church.

³⁴ William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession that Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: 2014), 24.

³⁵ Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 218.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Every church is different and unique. The pastoral leadership style, church culture and age of the church in relationship to the departing pastor will affect the transition.

Whether or not the transition is desired and welcome by the departing senior pastor will greatly influence the success of the transition/succession process. The model offered in this project, though biblically based, is not a “one size fits all” type. Within every denomination there are varying sizes, temperaments and cultures of churches.

Vanderbloemen and Bird wisely wrote that “All successions are unique. If every church is unique, then all successions are unique.”¹ While this uniqueness of every congregation is acknowledged, there is a need for succession in every church to be based on Bible principle. Every transition, whether “healthy-based” or poorly executed, affects the faith of the ministers involved as well as the faith of the parishioners. This unit will analyze several transitions from the biblical literature to show that God always had a transition plan and was never taken by surprise. We will review psychological theories of grief and their relativity to pastoral transition. We will also survey the prevailing theories being advocated by experts in the field of pastoral transition and conclude with the offering of

¹ Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession that Work*, 97.

our theory for a smooth pastoral leadership transition. This project offers Bible-based principles of succession that are adaptable to the situation, style, and culture of a given church.

Theories for the Non-existence of an Adventist Succession Plan

There is practically no Adventist literature on pastoral leadership transition and succession. This deficiency may be the result of three functional beliefs. Adventists are reluctant to talk about transition and much less to have a succession plan for the church because:

1. The Adventist church is a movement that is transitional in nature.
2. The church believes in the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Every leader sincerely hopes that Christ will return during his or her tenure and therefore many sees no need to prepare for transition/succession.
3. Talking about succession is seen as ambitious from the part of those who are possible successors, unspiritual and disloyal to the seating leader.

The mere mention of someone else as a possible successor to any leader may cause trouble for the person. He or she may conveniently be transferred to a different position as a result. During one of our interviews with a seating leader in a very important position in the church, the person lamented the loss of a very good friend who was president of a conference years ago. The person we interviewed was in a higher position than the conference president at the time. We will call him Pastor Z. Since the constituents wanted a change in leadership, they floated the name of Pastor Z as a possible successor to the president, but no one even bothered to contact Z because it was simply a trial balloon. A

few days before the constituency meeting when they would either reelect the current leader or choose a successor, the seating president called Pastor Z and related to him that he heard that he was interested in his position and was coming to challenge him. Pastor Z's response was of course no. As providence would have it, Pastor Z was elected to succeed his friend during the meeting. During our interview, Z became very emotional and choked back tears when saying that he lost the friendship of his predecessor from the day of his election. The predecessor went as far as to instruct his family not to invite Pastor Z to his funeral when he dies. Unfortunately, Pastor Z's story is not an isolated case. At all levels of the church, from the local church to the highest instances, relationships are being damaged as a result of changes in positions where there is no transition or succession plan. It befits the Seventh-day Adventist Church and other Protestant denominations that are established on biblical norms to follow the biblical examples and establish a leadership transition and succession policy. The reality is that it is very costly and detrimental not to have a plan. In the next few paragraphs, we will elaborate on the Adventist doctrines aforementioned that may be possible causes for the nonexistence of an official transition plan.

The Imminent Return of Christ

Adventist by definition means "the advent." The book, 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, summarizes the belief of the imminent return of Jesus in the following manner:

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Savior's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous

will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is near. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times.²

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not the only major Protestant denomination without a transition plan. For some like the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the transition process is simply a letter that puts the minister on notice that he or she may be transferred within ninety days with no knowledge of when the transfer may be and no idea of who the successor may be. Others do not even entertain the idea of succession for fear of being lamed duck leaders. The fact remains that transition and succession will happen whether or not there is a plan for it. The biblical record strongly suggests that it is wise for every institution, every denomination and every congregation to have a pastoral transition plan in place. Anthony B. Robinson presents ten necessary key factors for pastoral succession to be effective.³

1. The church in question needs to be a healthy one.
2. The outgoing pastor is able to be open to allow planning or lead time for the impending change.”
3. The church has experienced constant, evolutionary change.
4. The outgoing pastor is a mature person who manages his or her ego well and really does want pastoral succession to work.
5. The incoming pastor is a mature person who manages his or her ego well and really does want pastoral succession to work.
6. There is a good match between the outgoing and incoming pastors in terms of theology and approach to pastoral ministry.
7. The congregation understands the pastoral succession process and buys in.”
8. Even though there isn't one single model for how an outgoing pastor functions after leaving her or his position, there is discussion and clarity about what that person's role and expectations will be post-transition, before the actual change occurs.

² The Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* 18th Edition (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2010), 165.

³ Anthony Robinson, “Another Option,” in *Transitional Ministry Today: Successful Strategies for Churches and Pastors*, ed. Norman Bendroth (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 113-118.

9. The role the outgoing pastor assumes in preparing for the incoming pastor before the incoming pastor arrives or moves into the senior position is another critical factor in successful pastoral transitions.
10. The new pastor must be able to preach effectively.

Theories on When to Leave

Pastoral leadership transition is not term limit. It has nothing to do with the number of years one stays in a pastorate or leadership position. Whether it is one year, three years or forty years, the fact is there will be a successor and the church or organization needs to prepare for the transition.

Pastoral leadership transition needs good planning. “While any transition demands integrity, ministry transitions require special measures of integrity with regards to relationships. Take time to honor and celebrate the context God has called you to serve.”⁴ There are many theories on when to leave a congregation. Just as important is how a leader leaves a congregation. Joe Cothen is on point when stating this assertion. “After a pastor has spent several years with a congregation, leaving to accept another position can be a painful experience. The way in which a ministry is terminated is important both to the man and the people.”⁵ However, I take issue with Cothen’s view that you can write a letter of resignation, and giving “a two-weeks’ notice is normal in most churches.”⁶ This position as stated in his guide for pastors, that only two weeks’

⁴ Riley Walker and Marcia Patton, *When the Spirit Moves: A Guide for Ministers in Transition* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 133.

⁵ Joe Cothen, *Equipped for Good Work: A Guide for Pastors* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2002), 76.

⁶ Cothen, *Equipped for Good Work*, 77.

notice is needed and that “the advance notice should never be more than a month,”⁷ does not reflect an understanding and appreciation of the process of grief during pastoral succession. Except in the case of a crisis, accident or unplanned departure, even the final execution of a good succession plan will require more than two weeks.

When preparing the church for his or her eventual departure, the leader should not expect the congregation to understand everything at first. Some cannot imagine life without their beloved leader, and the leader may find it hard to talk about leaving; but it is a reality that he or she must face meticulously. When Jesus started to prepare his disciples for his departure, even at the farewell discourse, they did not fully understand the implications of his departure. Though Jesus clearly told them “But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away.”⁸ In the context of the farewell meal, Coloe wrote, “Jesus gathers his own and prepares them for his approaching ‘hour’. His words speak of the reality of his departure, but at the same time they hold out a promise of consolation to disciples, who in the present time can only experience bewilderment and lack of comprehension (14: 5, 8, 22).”⁹ Our review of the stages of grief later in this paper will reveal that the disciples were probably still at the stage of denial.

I contend that a pastoral leader needs to begin preparing the congregation very early on, if not from the day of his or her installation. Both leaders and constituents should be comfortable to talk about the fact that one day, someone will have to succeed him or her. Such understanding will in no way lessen the influence of the leader nor will

⁷ Cothen, *Equipped for Good Work*, 77.

⁸ John 16:7.

⁹ Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MS: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 177.

it hasten his or her departure prematurely. It will however, free the leader to talk openly about the legacy he or she would like to leave and the need for continuity of purpose in the ministry and life of the church. For a church with a mortgage, from day one, a leader can make statements like: "I would like to burn this mortgage before I leave this assignment." "I pray that we will be debt free by the time I leave." State specific goals that you would like to reach before leaving.

Psychological Impact of Pastoral Leadership Transition

Separation from a leader that a congregation has grown accustomed to is never easy. Even if the departure was planned, announced and expected, it may be difficult. The more successful the ministry, the more the congregation's membership increased during the leader's tenure, the more painful the separation will be. Congregation and leaders will go through the normal steps of grieving. John Fletcher, director of Inter/Met accurately describes this. "Pain cannot be excised from the experience of losing a pastor. People cannot be protected from the grief, anxiety, guilt, and anger they often feel when their minister leaves. But they can be helped to work with those feelings so that the pain becomes 'a garden from which good things can grow.'"¹⁰

Psychologically, pastoral leadership transition/succession may awaken in the parties involved feelings of a divorce and remarriage as well as the loss of a parent either unexpectedly or as a result of a prolonged illness where the loss was anticipated. The

¹⁰ Celia A. Hahn, *The Minister is Leaving: A Project Test Pattern Book in Parish Development* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1974), 5.

sociological and psychological impact on the departing or incoming leaders and their families, on the congregation and the community can be enormous.

I was a thirty-seven-year-old pastor when a church member who was a senior citizen and grandmother came to see me with a group of seniors in the church and set me down to remind me: “Pastor you are the father of all of us. We are all brothers and sisters and you are our father even though we are older than you. You are our spiritual father.” When the church is like a family of believers, the pastor is seen as the parent and the members are brothers and sisters. At the time of transition, losing a beloved pastor may feel like losing a parent. In cases where the leader’s departure was announced months in advance, the parishioners get to anticipate the leader’s exit and prepare themselves accordingly.

If the leadership change is sudden and unexpected in cases of crisis transitions when a leader has to abruptly leave for moral issues or for abrupt sickness or tragic death, the psychological impact is not unlike the sudden loss of a parent. The members have grown accustomed to the pastor. He or she is the one who feeds them spiritually every week, visits them, blesses their babies, organizes and conducts funerals, gives counsel and direction to their families and serves as the preacher and spokesperson for God. If the transition is not done properly, the psycho-spiritual damage to the church members can be irreparable. It may also adversely influence the member’s relationship with the incoming leader. In all cases, both the congregation and the departing leader need time to grieve.

Psycho-Spiritual Need to Grieve the Departure of a Pastor

When Moses died, God told the people to take thirty days of mourning. “The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.”¹¹ As for the transition from Jesus to his disciples, the Bible says that: “After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”¹² A smooth transition will allow the church members room to grieve. Their hearts will be more disposed to receive the incoming pastor if they have had a chance to properly say goodbye to the departing ministerial family. Even after the new leader is installed in a congregation, he or she will be wise to take stock that some of the members may still be grieving the loss of the preceding leader. Some will take longer than others, but they all need to grieve. While the loss of a pastor can never be compared with the death of a loved one, a member or church community that was very close to a cherished pastor may experience some of the same emotions experienced during grief. In their guide for ministers in transition, Walker and Patton admit that members and pastors go through the grief stages. “Grief is our emotional response to the loss of anything important to us. It is important for us to be in touch with our grief. Our experience of grief will begin when we agree with God that it is time to transition.”¹³ The next few paragraphs will endeavor to identify some of ways a member or a congregation may identify with the five steps of grieving the loss of a pastor.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 34:8.

¹² Acts 1:3.

¹³ Walker and Patton, *When the Spirit Moves*, 134.

Kübler-Ross and Kessler deserve credit for popularizing the five stages of grief. However, others have found different processes. Spiegel found three stages of bereavement: “Shock, controlled Regression and adaptation.”¹⁴ Engel advocates six stages of grief: “shock and disbelief, awareness development, restitution, resolution of the loss, idealization and outcome.”¹⁵ There are obvious commonalities between Kübler-Ross and Kessler, Engel, Spiegel and others in their views of grief emotions. Theoretically, we will study grief during pastoral leadership transition as identified with the five stages advocated by Kübler-Ross and Kessler.

Writing about the stages of grief, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler rightly caution that “they were never meant to help tuck messy emotions into neat packages. They were responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss. Grief is as individual as our lives.”¹⁶

Denial

At this stage the church members, especially those who were very close to the pastor, refuse to accept the fact that their leader is leaving. The conference must have made a mistake. It is not true. Special attention here should be given to members who have joined the church during the tenure of the minister. Those who got baptized by the departing pastors and the children in the church who have known only the departing

¹⁴ Spiegel Yorick, *The Grief Process: Analysis and Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1973), 59-81.

¹⁵ George Engel, “Grief and Grieving,” *American Journal of Nursing* 64 (1964), 93-98.

¹⁶ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2005), 7.

pastor need to be cared for patiently. Denials will tell them that the conference must have made a mistake. Even with a formal announcement or a letter from the conference, they may still be in denial that the minister is departing. Conference leaders as well as the outgoing and incoming pastors need to tread softly with members in the stage of denial and not attempt to hurry the healing process or make members feel guilty for being in denial. “The feelings are important; they are the psyche’s protective mechanism. Letting in all the feeling associated with loss at once would be overwhelming emotionally.”¹⁷ It would also be spiritually overwhelming for a young church member who has only known the departing minister. More mature members need to be patient with those who may be experiencing pastoral transition for the first time in their spiritual journey.

Anger

When it becomes undeniable that the pastor is leaving, the denial develops into anger. The church members may be angry at the conference president for transferring their beloved pastor. They may send angry letters to the conference threatening to withdraw their financial support. They may be angry at the pastor for not refusing to leave. They may be feeling betrayed and left to deal with unfinished business of the church. Some will encourage the pastor to “tell the conference that you want to stay.” The anger is very real at this stage. Members may be angry at the local leaders. Anger may be directed at a local leader or elder John who was seen as causing trouble for the pastor. “The reason our pastor is leaving is because elder John disrespected him or her.” They may be angry at themselves for not doing enough to keep the pastor from leaving. They may be angry at God for taking from them a pastor, a parent, a friend, a spiritual

¹⁷ Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, 10.

leader that they love so much and who has done a lot for them. Anger is often a necessary step on the road to acceptance. As Ron Potter-Efron and Pat Potter-Efron put it: “anger is a gift, a natural part of the human condition, but it isn’t easy to handle.”¹⁸ Allow church members to feel and express their anger for the loss of their leader. “Once you allow yourself to feel and speak out the anger, you may find that your God is strong enough to handle your anger, strong enough to feel compassion and love for you, even in the midst of your anger at him.”¹⁹ If the parishioners’ anger is not well managed, some may lose faith and leave the church all together. Another step of grief is bargaining.

Bargaining

The church now tries to negotiate with the conference. “Bargaining may fill the gaps that our strong emotions generally dominate, which often keep suffering at a distance. It allows us to believe that we can restore order to the chaos that has taken over.”²⁰ They no longer deny the right of the conference or the executive committee to transfer the pastor. They may send a petition with the signature of many members asking the conference to reconsider the move. Many reasons may be given for the petition. The pastor is doing a good job; it would be terrible to transfer her at this time. The church is in the middle of a building project or renovation. Please leave the pastor until after the project is completed. The pastor is sick and there are good hospitals nearby. The children are in school; one is a junior in high school, and it would devastate the family to be

¹⁸ Ron Potter-Efron and Pat Potter-Efron. *Letting Go of the Anger: The 10 Most Common Anger Styles and What to do About Them* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc. 1995), 3.

¹⁹ Kübler Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, 15.

²⁰ Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, 20.

moving at this time. The reasons given may vary, but the idea is to bargain with the authorities and negotiate a longer stay for the pastor.

It should be noted at this point that the pastors and their families also go through the grieving process. They too need to grieve their separation from a church and people that they have lived with, ministered with and loved for years. Farris' tenth commandment for pastors leaving a congregation is "thou shalt grieve."²¹ Our experience in pastoral transition supports Farris' position that "accepting that grief is a necessary part of pastoral change and is a needed last step for successfully leaving a congregation."²² The negotiation and petition to stay may also come from the pastor.

Depression

After the bargaining, the present reality is that, no matter what, the pastor is leaving. Spiritual depression may set in. This is the time when the members do not feel like going to church knowing that the beloved minister will not be there. They wake up in the morning knowing that they should go to church but have no enthusiasm. What's the point of going to church? The person who used to be excited about going to church to hear the favorite phrases from the lips of the pastor sees no need to get out of bed to go to church. "As difficult as it is to endure," writes Kübler-Ross and Kessler, "depression has elements that can be helpful in grief. It slows us down and allows us to take real stock of the loss. It makes us rebuild ourselves from the ground up. It clears the deck for growth.

²¹ Lawrence W. Farris, *Ten Commandments for Pastors Leaving a Congregation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 81.

²² Farris, *Ten Commandments for Pastors*, 87.

It takes us to a deeper place in our soul that we would not normally explore.”²³ It is therefore imperative that pastors and members understand the symptoms of depression and take time to grieve. “Allow yourself the freedom and the time to grieve. Spend some time reflecting on your ministry in that church. Talk with close friends as a way of ‘debriefing’ or ‘unloading.’” “Expect a whole mixture of feelings: grief, joy, guilt, excitement, and sadness. Be kind to yourself and admit any unfinished business without blaming yourself for not accomplishing all the ministry you had intended.”²⁴

Acceptance

The petitions have been rejected. The grieving members have found the courage to go to church, even though it is painful to go there and not see the pastor they are used to see there every week. The outgoing pastor has announced the date to preach his or her last sermon, and the date for the installation of the new pastor is revealed. The members who were in the church before the departing leader arrived, along with those who have experienced several pastoral transitions, will be the first to reach the acceptance stage. Those who have not reached the stage of acceptance and are still in the bargaining stage may simply decide that they will follow the pastor to his or her next church. They may find consolation in the fact that the leader is not going too far and that they can drive to his or her new church. “Finding acceptance may be just having more good days than bad. As we begin to live again and enjoy our life, we may often feel that in doing so, we are betraying our loved one. We may start to reach out to others and become involved in their

²³ Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, 24.

²⁴ Michael J. Coyner, *Making a Good Move: Opening the Door to a Successful Pastorate* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 17.

lives.”²⁵ However, those who are at the acceptance stage are now talking about the transition process. What are we going to do for the pastor? How will we organize his or her farewell? A transition committee is in order if one does not exist. The task of the committee is to prepare both the farewell and the welcome for outgoing and incoming leaders respectively.

The Departing Leader is Grieving Too

Pastoral ministry, whether successful or not, involves close association with local leaders and members. Pastoral family members often develop very close relationships with their closest collaborators. They spend a lot of time planning together, visiting each other, visiting members; and they also go through happy and sad episodes of life together. The many days spent in committees trying to solve problems, going on trips, planning and participating in worship services together bond the souls of pastors and parishioners. In times of transitions, the pastoral family members also experience very excruciating feelings of separation from the people they have worked with so closely. Their grief may be reflected in ambivalent behaviors that are not easy to explain. White explains that “many clergies in preparing to move develop destructive or negative behavior to resolve the psychic conflict within themselves. This comes about, not out of demonic, unconscious forces, but because most do not take time to reflect on what the change in jobs is likely to mean, and what they are likely to experience and feel during the

²⁵ Coyner, *Making a Good Move*, 28.

transition period.”²⁶ To avoid the pain and face the sadness, some writers believe that the pastor should take a quick exit and go out of state and make no contact with the church.

Some writers have promoted the theory that the departing minister should leave quickly once his or her transfer is known. Others want the pastor to leave in two weeks. Others prefer a month at the most. We argue that the theory of a quick exit without properly saying goodbye would be destructive. Farris explains that

leaving a congregation with which one has enjoyed pleasant years of mutual ministry can also be a time of strong emotions, albeit more positive one, in which it is tempting to ‘steal away’ giving very short notice and trying to simply slip away almost unnoticed, as if it were possible to end-run all the deep feelings a pastoral transition evokes.²⁷

The notion of a quick exit ignores the need to grieve and attempts to stifle the natural emotions that come as a result of separation and the stages of grief. Above all, it tries to egoistically deal with the emotions of the departing leader while ignoring the necessities of the congregation. That could also have an adverse consequence on the beginning of the ministry of the successor. The way the predecessor leaves has a lot to do with the way the successor is received by the congregation. “Perhaps,” writes Farris, “the most essential reason to give ample notice of a departure – three months, on average – is to allow adequate time for pastors and congregation to say goodbye with depth, honesty, and gratitude. Will it be easy? Probably not. Will it be worthwhile? Absolutely.”²⁸ Instead of avoiding the profound emotions that come with transition and separation, a leader should seek to develop the ability to manage separation during pastoral transition to be able to

²⁶ Edward A. White, *Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 1998), 45.

²⁷ Farris, *Ten Commandments for Pastors*, 27.

²⁸ Farris, *Ten Commandments for Pastors*, 27.

minister to the church members. This is what Bloom-Feshbach calls “separation mastery.”²⁹ “The capacity to master separation facilitates growth by permitting an openness to losing the familiar, be it people or their support. Separation mastery allows the individual to face the specter of ambiguity that accompanies surrendering ideals, hopes or self-images”³⁰

Leave While you are Fulfilled and Satisfied

In many cases, the time to leave the congregation comes by a vote of the executive committee upon the recommendation of the president of the conference or a vote of a constituency session for elected officials or board of trustees for institutions. Departure can be induced by actions beyond the control of the pastor. Aside from the situations outside of her or his control, when is the best time for a pastor to leave a congregation? I would argue that the best time to leave is when you are doing very well. When you are on top of your game, leave before you have overstayed your welcome. “Some pastors stay too long. They hang on when in fact their ministry has peaked or been completed.”³¹

The Holy Spirit will impress upon the heart of every leader when it is time to go. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, most of the times it is by a vote of the conference executive committee. The leader in turn will need to be obedient to the promptings of the

²⁹ Jonathan Bloom-Feshbach, Sally Bloom-Feshbach and Associates, *The Psychology of Separation Loss: Perspectives on Developments, Life Transitions, and Clinical Practice* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1987), 3.

³⁰ Bloom-Feshbach and Associates, *The Psychology of Separation Loss*, 3.

³¹ Paul D. Robbins, *When It's Time to Move: A Guide to Changing Churches*, vol. 4, The Leadership Library (Carol Stream, IL; Waco, TX: Christianity Today, Inc.; Word Books, 1985), 18.

Spirit. Successful pastoral leaders like Elijah, David, Paul, Samuel, Eli, Moses and our Lord Jesus enjoy preparing others to lead after they leave and understand that only God is eternal and omnipresent in the life of the church. The best time to leave is while people still want you to stay. Farris argues that “there comes a time when what can be done has been done. Often the time to consider departing comes when a major project – a building renovation, a new mission commitment – has been completed.”³² The pastor who feels such a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment can have a conversation with the conference president about the possibility of moving. It is a much easier conversation to have than if you are having trouble in the district and people are asking when will you depart. Many misguidedly ignore the urging of the Spirit and even asked to stay longer because they are happy at the time. When the pastor is happy and the congregation is happy with the leader, this is the best time to leave. Farris cautions that “if this sense of satisfaction and completion is ignored, a pastor may very well begin to feel stagnant or restless.”³³

There are people who claim that the pastor should not talk about it at all to the church. Others maintain that the departed pastor should stay away for at least a year. Perhaps he or she should move to another state. These positions may have some value depending on the circumstances of the transfer. In some cases, the presence of the former leader may be the best support for the new. In any case our bible-based model calls for a systematic, intentional, long-term plan of transition. The transition process must be known and understood by everyone involved.

³² Farris, *Ten Commandments for Pastors*, 9.

³³ Farris, *Ten Commandments for Pastors*, 9.

Conclusion

We have reviewed several theories on pastoral leadership transitions and the psychological, social and spiritual effect on both pastors and members. In his article “Putting Success in Succession,” Warren Bird quotes Gene Getz saying that: “There is no one pattern or approach for making a successful transition. We need to be guided by supernatural principles that emerge from biblical models and directives.”³⁴

The process of pastoral transition at times can be a pipe from which flow both joy and distress. It is a bitter-sweet experience for the church family, for the departing pastoral family and the incoming pastoral family. The departing minister need to ethically do his or her best to prepare the church to welcome the incoming pastor. The local church leaders need to organize a farewell sendoff event for the pastoral family. The farewell banquet or ceremony may be tearful and must allow both members and departing pastor time to express mutual appreciation. This may be the pastor’s farewell discourse and departing words. White wrote that,

A final word to your congregation in which you acknowledge your actions and feelings not only will help you maintain your integrity and reputation, but can be healing for the congregation which must now grieve its loss of you. Gratitude expressed to them for their ministry to you as well as for the opportunity to minister to them should be a part of this confessional and intimate moment.³⁵

Many people may not yet have begun to grieve the pastor’s loss. Some of the younger Christians may refuse to accept the new leadership because they are still mourning the pastor’s departure. The situation may be traumatizing and seem unfair to the children. If

³⁴ Warren Bird, “Putting Success in Succession,” *Christianity Today* 58, no. 9 (2014): 50-53.

³⁵ Pamley C. Ingram, “Reflections on Ending Ministry in a Congregation,” in *Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors. Reflections on Ending Ministry in a Congregation*, ed. Edward A. White (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 1990), 47.

not handled with care, a pastoral transition may permanently wound the souls of parishioners. Some, still grieving, are not ready to accept the new pastoral leadership. Others, who were not in favor with the former pastor, may seek to exploit the situation for their own selfish gain to the detriment of the new leader.

During the transition, the outgoing leader must do all that is in her or his power to help the successor.

Failure to take the time to help the new pastor, for whatever reason, is inconsiderate, harmful to the congregation, and can leave the departing pastor with a sense of incompleteness. Leaving well is about blessing those who remain and those who will follow, and the gift of detailed documentation will be a blessing to everyone involved in the pastoral transition.³⁶

The end result of not helping a successor or colleague may be damaged relationships between both pastoral colleagues and fellow church members.

We conclude that, except in crisis transition or in case of extraordinary circumstances, the assigning authorities should allow a minimum of thirty to forty days for pastoral leadership transition. The transition time will give everyone time for grief of the separation. Coyner understood that when he wrote that, “pastors who work through their own grief process are far more likely to help their churches to grieve too. Whatever may be your own way of grieving, find times and places to do so. It is one of the best ways for you to minister to your old church and to prepare for moving to your new church.”³⁷

³⁶ Farris, *Ten Commandments for Pastors*, 58.

³⁷ Coyner, *Making a Good Move*, 17.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The church, regardless of its size, is made of many members; and each member – the pastor, the elder, the deacon, or departmental director – has a function. The church community functions wonderfully when everyone plays his or her role. The Apostle Paul formulated the integration concept masterfully when he wrote that “in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Rom 12:3-5). This project also is an edifice, a structure built on four foundations: the biblical foundations, the historical foundation, the theological foundation and the theoretical foundation. Each foundation was important and all four together formed a solid underpinning for the project.

The purpose of this final chapter is to show how the final project resulted from the work done during the last three years along with the project. This unit will analyze the function that each foundation paper played in the overall project. In essence, it will speak to how the foundation papers impacted the project. I extracted from the Biblical foundation texts the components of this transition model. First, God is the initiator of the transition process. Yahweh alone knows when is the best time for a leader to transition from one pastoral position to another. Second, a representative of a higher organization,

conference president or transferring power meets privately with the departing leader to discuss the transition. Third, the transferring authority meets with the incoming pastor separately. They have a meeting with both incoming and outgoing pastors together. Fourth, the predecessor and successor meet privately to pray, plan and discuss the transition. Fifth, they both meet in the presence of the whole church or constituency where the outgoing pastor introduces the incoming leader and pledges to support his or her successor. Sixth, the new leader is installed and does nothing to undermine the leadership of the predecessor.

The two parts of the biblical foundation paper, namely the Old Testament foundation text and the New Testament text, played different roles as well in the development of the transition model. The Old Testament passage, Deuteronomy 31:7-8, very specifically outlined the components of the model. We have discovered that we still have churches with strong leaders that are unique like Moses, pastors that are loved like Moses and successors that are positioned like Joshua. All six segments of the project are extracted from the Old Testament text.

The New Testament foundation text confirmed the efficacy and applicability of the leadership transition as modeled in the Moses to Joshua transition. More importantly, it validated the choice of the Old Testament text and showed the necessity for every church to have a pastoral leadership transition plan. Our New Testament text also demonstrated that with the Lord's forgiveness and blessing, even an imperfect leader like Peter, who accepted the Lord's pardon and was comforted and guided by the Holy Spirit, was an immensely productive and effective leader of the church.

In the historical foundation, we found historical proof that the project was indeed applicable and replicable. The issues that faced Elder Daniells' transitions, as predecessor or successor, remain the same issues facing pastors or leaders in the twenty-first century. The same questions that generations of leaders had to deal with in the early 1900s, pastors and conference leaders must deal with today. What shall be the attitude of a predecessor toward a successor during the transitional epoch? What is the relationship between predecessor and successor after the transition? Can the departing pastor, if still alive or within the state, continue to serve under the person who succeeded her or him? Will the people who support the ministry of a beloved pastor continue to willingly support the ministry of his or her successor? This research has provided some of the answers to these questions.

The analogy of the church as a body with many parts reminded us that the body of the church was not a structure built with cement and mortars; but the materials are people, flesh and blood. Church brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers are the "living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood" (I Pet 2:5). The incoming and outgoing pastors, the church members and the assigning authorities are human beings with feelings and infirmities. They experience pains and joys, elations and frustrations, as well as accomplishments and shortcomings. The theoretical foundation paper explicates how people are psychologically and socially affected by transitions. Church members who have been blessed by the ministry of a leader, who have loved and worked with a pastor, will feel the psychological impact of the loss and separation. Everyone needs to understand that everyone else involved in transition may be at different stages of grief during the transition process. Leaders and members alike will go

through periods of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Their relationship with God and people, irrespective of their position, will be seen through the lens of their grief. Therefore, during pastoral transitions, we must not only understand that we may be grieving, but we must allow ourselves and others time to grieve. This demonstrates the overarching impact of the omnipresence of God in the church and the implications for our model for pastoral leadership transition.

Hypothesis

A present reality in the life of churches is that pastors come and go. Some of the pastors have long pastorates and some have short pastorates. This time of “coming and going” is referred to in this document as transitions. Times of transitions can be very painful and problematic for the outgoing pastor (and family), the incoming pastor (and family) and the members of the church. A sense of mistrust often occurs and is directed at the general church executives, the incoming pastor and other members. These situations can have a devastating effect on the overall vitality and ministry of the church. It is my assertion that if a Biblical-based model of ministry is developed to assist in the transitions of pastors involving the leadership of the church, much of the pain, alienation and mistrust can be done away with and/or properly channeled.

This hypothesis, building on the foundational work, will seek the input of church executives, pastors and church leaders in getting input to address the problems that arise out of transitions that in turn will aid me in putting together a model of ministry to facilitate transitions of pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Intervention

The context of this project is the Philadelphia Church located in Malden, Massachusetts. I have been involved in pastoral transitions as a church member, pastor, and coordinator of other pastors. I have pastored eleven churches, and preceded or succeeded others nine times in twenty-nine years. I experienced the difficulties of pastoral transfers as a child and faced them during my professional career. I have had the responsibility to recruit, assign and reassign pastors. Churches and pastors in many cases are having difficulties and finding it problematic to minister in congregations where pastoral transition is not well planned.

If conference administrators, search committees, church leaders and pastors learn how to implement this model of leadership transition, they will experience the benefits and joys of healthy ministerial transitions. A smooth transition will foster healing, continuity and cooperation between leaders and members.

The purpose of this project was to develop and evaluate a Bible-based transition model for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In order to determine the best way to apply this model, and overcome predictable transitional difficulties, I conducted four workshops for church members, surveyed their leaders and interviewed four elected officials.

Research Design

The methodology used in the project was the Embedded Mixed Method research. Creswell explains that “the core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete

understanding of a research problem than either approach alone.”¹ I used data triangulation to establish the validity and certainty of the study. Some of the questions on the survey were open-ended and some were closed ended questions.

Measurement

The goal of this project was to present my hypothesis that a careful uniform transition/succession tool can be effective for changes in pastoral appointments in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Though biblical guides were used in the foundational narrative, it was still important to receive feedback from members and other persons who have experienced pastoral changes and to use their responses, along with other input and insight that they might have, to strengthen the overall document based on empirical findings from participants of both the workshops along with multiple instances of pastoral changes/transitions/successions in the church.

Instrumentation

The pre- and post-test surveys (See Appendix A and B) were used as the primary instrument for this project. Biblical scholarship, along with a historical, theological and theoretical critique of pastoral changes, have much to offer a pastor or church leadership about how to go about the process, if there is one at all, of reassigning pastors and the implications for the church membership in light of its input and time to process such a change. What was needed also was a buy-in from those persons who were affected

¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 4.

disproportionately – that being the laity of the church. Hence, the surveys were used to gleaned information of feelings as well as in the critical insight that members have to offer thus living out the Apostle Paul anatomical metaphor of the church as the body of Christ.

Implementation

A Template for Pastoral/Leadership Change and Succession

Pastoral leadership transition can be a problematic time for the church family, for the incoming pastor's family, the outgoing pastor's family and for the community at large. The Seventh-day Adventist Church currently does not have a succession plan. There is often a lack of proper preparation and no established process of transition between the outgoing minister and his/her successor. "When it comes to dealing with pastoral transitions, many strong leaders stop leading."² The subject of transition/succession itself is often not discussed because pastors and their entourage are not comfortable talking about when he or she is no longer there. Members do not want their minister to feel that they are not appreciated and that their departure is wanted. Pastors also may not want their members to think that they are looking for other assignments because they are not happy at their present church. When there is no accepted succession process, the potential for discontinuity and dissatisfaction of all parties involved is high. The departing pastor has not prepared himself or herself and his

² Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 2.

or her church for the transition. This in turn will cause the incoming pastor to arrive at a church that is not ready to receive the new leader or may even be hostile to the new leader. They are emotionally and spiritually attached to the pastor they are used to. They have not had a chance to prepare themselves mentally to accept a new leader. Some members who are very attached and have worked closely with the pastor may feel that they need to remain loyal to the departing leader and show hostility to the new leader. They often do not get a chance to grieve over the departure of their beloved leader. Another problem is that the children are often neglected and not involved in the transition process. The children of the churches are often very attached to their pastor and may see him or her as the representative of God. Without the proper succession, they may interpret the departure of their pastor as the absence of God in their church.

Davis accurately notes that “despite the available biblical guidance, pastoral transition present varying degrees of challenge for nearly every ecclesiastical organization.”³ The negative impact on the incoming minister and family is also astounding. The pastor who is not prepared and properly transitioned into a new assignment begins with a disadvantage and may lose valuable time trying to be accepted and win over the confidence of the church instead of taking advantage of the transitional honeymoon period to sell his vision for the church. Many colleagues in ministry have had their relationships damaged as a result of a pastoral transition where they preceded or succeeded each other. One may feel that the other is trying to undermine his or her ministry or worse that the successor is trying to undo his or her accomplishments. The

³ Victor M. Davis, *An Alternative Model for Pastoral Succession in the African American Baptist Church in Lieu of Congregational Voting*, DMin Thesis, United Theological Seminary (Dayton, OH: 2006), 5.

church members or parishioners who want to remain loyal may contact the former pastor to report how the new pastor is undoing the good work that has been done because they have not yet accepted the new pastor as their pastor. When they reach that point, their language will change from “the new pastor” to “my pastor.” Some will even follow the former pastor to his new church assignment even if he or she discourages them from doing so. They care less about the distance. All they want is to preserve their spiritual connection with their former pastor. Others will continually compare the present and former pastors’ leadership styles, personalities and involvement or non-involvement of their spouse, children and other family members.

This proposed succession model will begin with the conference administration, the appointing body. For elected officials, it may be initiated by a higher level in the denomination. It will implicate the departing minister in the transitioning process, the incoming pastor and the local church leadership before the involvement of the church members. This researched and evidence-based biblical model can be replicated in other Protestant denominations. The proposed pastoral leadership plan comprises six Bible-based components. Every church needs to have a transition plan that will ensure continuity of purpose and ministry. The plan needs to clearly explain the process that is triggered during the implementation of a leadership transition. The six components are:

- A. The Conference president initiates the transfer based on relevant variables taking into consideration the need and the culture of the local church. Once a “capable and suitable”⁴ leader with the skillsets needed in the church is identified, the conference administration will bring the pastoral transfer

⁴ This expression is used in Elder A. G. Daniells’ letters to Ellen and Arthur White.

proposition for a vote of the executive committee. As a courtesy to the worker, prior to the vote of the executive committee or the board of trustee, the conference president or his/her designee will consult with the pastors and inform them that their names are under consideration for assignment or reassignment.

- B. The conference administration or ministerial secretary will meet with both the successor and predecessor. This meeting will first be with the departing leader. Second, with the incoming leader. Third, with both departing and incoming pastors together. The meeting will be for a general briefing of the culture and the needs of the church. They will also discuss and coordinate the timing of the succession process.
- C. The departing and incoming leaders will then schedule a time to meet in private to discuss the transition. This meeting may take place in the church in the absence of any parishioners or in a neutral venue. The purpose of the meeting will be to get acquainted and to plan and pray together for a smooth and healthy transition. Both ministers should genuinely pledge to support and affirm the ministry of the other.
- D. Prior to his or her last day in the church, the departing minister will invite the incoming leader to the church to enthusiastically introduce him or her to the new congregation and warmly, sincerely charge and encourage the local leaders to support the leadership of their new pastor. The current leader should unequivocally inform the congregation that he or she had met with the incoming leader. During this invitation, the incoming leader will not preach

nor conduct any meeting. It is simply a meet and greet event with no statement from the leader in waiting. The departing pastor is still the only leader of the church, even if the conference executive committee had already voted the reassignment.

- E. When the date of departure of the outgoing leader has been set, the board of trustees or local church board will appoint a transition committee to manage both the departure of the outgoing leader and the welcoming of the new leader. The head elder or second in command will chair the first meeting of the transition committee. The transition activities should include a time when the whole congregation is involved and when both the outgoing leader and the local church members and leaders can express appreciation and say goodbye. Then, the transition committee will turn to the task of preparing the arrival and installation of the new leader.
- F. The new pastor is introduced and installed as the new leader in the presence of all the people. The new pastor needs to express heartfelt appreciation for the ministry and accomplishments of his or her predecessor. There must also be an expression of thankfulness for the time incoming and departing leaders spent together in prayer and planning for the church. A fellowship meal is served on that day.

It is our hope that when the pastors and local church leaders and members go through the process of transition by implementing this researched model, they will be able to implement the model. It is also our intent that pastors will be able to work cooperatively with their predecessor or successor, and the churches will have effective ministry

continuity. The church administrators will spend less time repairing damaged relations and more time building the church. A good transition process will strengthen collegial relationship among fellow pastors and lessen the natural difficulties that come with separations.

Workshop #1

This workshop took place on March 12, 2016. We met in the multipurpose room in the George Earl Building in Hyde Park, New York. Those present were the members of the context associates from the Philadelphie Church along with others. The purpose of the workshop was to present the proposed model to a wider range of people from other churches to see whether or not the model could be replicated in contexts other than the Philadelphie Church. There were twenty-two members of Philadelphie Church and 150 people from thirty other churches. In the introduction, I explained that this workshop was part of a doctoral project of United Theological Seminary and that their contribution is appreciated.

The participants were very animated and excited about the model and eleven people particularly expressed that this model could be implemented in their churches with the next transition of pastors. It happened that the Philadelphie Church district was also going through pastoral transition in one of their daughter churches. I shared the model with the incoming and outgoing pastor, and they expressed appreciation for it and vowed to apply it. The workshop lasted one and a half hours. One hour was given to the presentation and thirty minutes for questions, comments and interaction.

The workshop on spiritual leadership was in a slide presentation (See Appendix E). I argued that good spiritual leadership demands good transition planning. The second set of slides was about the need for smooth transition during pastoral changes. The third part of the presentation revealed the six parts of the proposed transition model as found in Deuteronomy 31 and supported by the New Testament foundation text. The final part of the presentation explained the benefits of a good transition model including the fact that it facilitates continuity of purpose and mission in the church. This part proved to be very challenging as seven different people took turn to recall the lack of transition planning in their church and how incoming pastors would completely reverse course from their predecessor as though the church did not exist before he or she arrived. Through all the support and affirmations, there was one person who was against the model. He felt that having a transition plan would usher in church dynasties. At the conclusion, we took a vote on the feasibility of the transition model. 162 of the 172 voted in favor while 10 abstained. There was no vote against it.

Workshop #2

The second workshop took place on the campus of the Atlantic Union College, forty-nine miles from the Philadelphia Church. There were ten people present. The purpose was to present the workshop and then survey the participants to garner their evaluation of the need for a pastoral leadership transition plan. They were told that this was part of the requirements of a doctoral degree project that is researching the need for a model of pastoral transition. All of them were willing to participate and 90% returned the survey after the presentation. They asked very thought-provoking questions regarding the

possibility of having this model changed into policies for the church and beyond. The group was very diverse ethnically, philosophically, and in gender. The workshop lasted three hours with a ten-minutes break every hour. They were given surveys to fill out (See Appendix A and B) after the second hour of presentation which came after the second ten-minute break. All of the participants declared that there was a need for the transition model.

Workshop #3

The third workshop took place on September 2, 2016 in Orlando, Florida, with members of the church from a variety of background. Twenty-five people attended. The process was similar to the first two workshops, but noticeably the survey's response rate, 15%, was very low compared with the second workshop followed by a 90% survey response rate. The difference was that in the second workshop I had the participants to fill out the survey before the end of the session. In Orlando, I distributed the survey forms after the workshop and asked them to return them to me later. Though the expression of need for the transition model was just as strong, when they left with the surveys, the return rate dropped significantly.

Workshop #4 - Group Assessment

We met on December 31, 2016 in the deacon multipurpose room in the Philadelphie Church. The thirteen participating members of the church were very animated and excited about contributing to this project. This was a group assessment method to collect data and evaluation as much as a workshop. Eight of the participants

had gone through pastoral changes more than ten times each. Two people experienced pastoral transition seven times, one five times and one four times. Three of the participants had been members of the church since its inception before 1979. They had seen all the pastors come and go.

We asked the group to share their experiences with pastoral transition before the presentation. The overarching concern seemed to be the need for continuity. They expressed frustration with having to start over again and again every time a new pastor comes. They talked at length about pastors who come to the church without having been thoroughly briefed by their predecessor about the plans, the strategies and the culture of the church. One hundred percent of the participants believe that there should be a written report from the outgoing pastor given to the incoming pastor during their meeting prior to the installation of the new pastor. The report must be in writing and include the long term strategic plans of the church. The incoming pastor, while maintaining her or his own personality and creativity, will be free to have new initiatives while working with the voted strategic plan of the church. The workshop with questions and answers formally lasted two hours from 6:30 pm to 8:30 p. m., but the discussions and inputs continued afterwards.

Collection and Analysis of Data

The data collected included interviews from a North American Vice President, a Union President, my professional associates, one conference associate, five current and former pastors of the Philadelphia Church and five church members (See Appendix C and D). We also collected data from the four workshops and surveys responses received

from twenty-one people. The participants of the fourth workshop served also as a group assessment method of evaluation. In order to satisfy the credibility of the findings, we used triangulation. Our goal was to develop and evaluate a pastoral transition method for the Philadelphie Church that can be replicated in other churches. After collecting the data, we read the result countless times, identified commonalities in the responses, analyzed the triangulated findings and compared them with the components of the proposed model.

Every one (100%) of the people interviewed and surveyed agreed that we needed a pastoral transition plan for the church. Most were actually surprised that the church did not already have such a plan. 208 of the 220 people (87%) who attended the workshops strongly supported the transition model. The other 13% abstained or expressed little interest in the project. The data suggests that the members are very concerned with the lack of continuity as a result of pastoral changes. Continuity or its lack thereof was a common and recurring topic throughout this research. After the people expressed the need to have a transition plan, they were all presented with the proposed model and the biblical and theological foundations for the model. The overwhelming majority thought that the transition model would protect the church and wanted the meeting between the pastors to be a mandatory and formal meeting. A very detailed inventory of the church assets and ongoing projects should be prepared and given to the incoming pastor. They also want the transition model to become the policy of the church and that both incoming and outgoing pastors must abide by it. Furthermore, the people assessed that this transition model should be implemented not only for pastoral transitions but also for intra

church departmental transitions. By a show of hands, 100% declared that this is suitable and feasible; and that this should be a regular policy of the church.

Unexpected Findings

A very unexpected discovery in this research is the church members' position of the length of time a pastor should stay in the church. The eighth question of the survey asked whether or not the pastor should stay in the church until retirement and question nine asked how many years should the pastor stay in the church (See Appendix B). We started this research with the assumption that people who love their pastors wanted them to stay until retirement. At the time of transfer, people who appreciate the ministry of the minister very often want him or her to stay much longer. We discovered that both the categories of people who considered themselves friends of the pastors and those who considered themselves not friends of the pastors did not want the pastor to remain in the church until retirement. Everyone surveyed and interviewed, including those who loved their pastor, said the pastor should not stay until his retirement in one church. Among those who do not consider themselves friends of their current pastor, by a margin of two to one, want the pastoral tenure to be four to eight years. Also noticeable is the fact the no one thinks the pastor should stay for less than four years in the church. From those who like their current pastor and considered him or her as their friends, none thought the pastor should stay only one to three years. Since the unspoken rule of the length of a pastor's stay in the church seems to be four years, one could argue that the members have mirrored this tradition or have simply come to expect that. However, those same members do express a desire for their pastors to stay longer at the time of transfer. One

could also argue that this is because 2016 is a transition year both in the Conference, the Union and a presidential election year in the United States of America. Regardless of the reason, the data seems to be overwhelmingly against a pastor staying in the church for ten, twenty or thirty years until retirement (See Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Table I

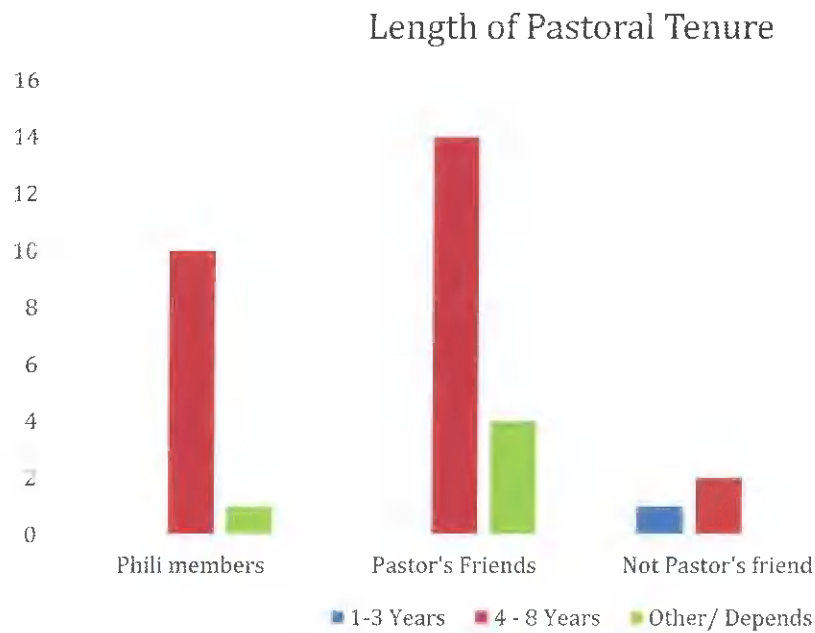
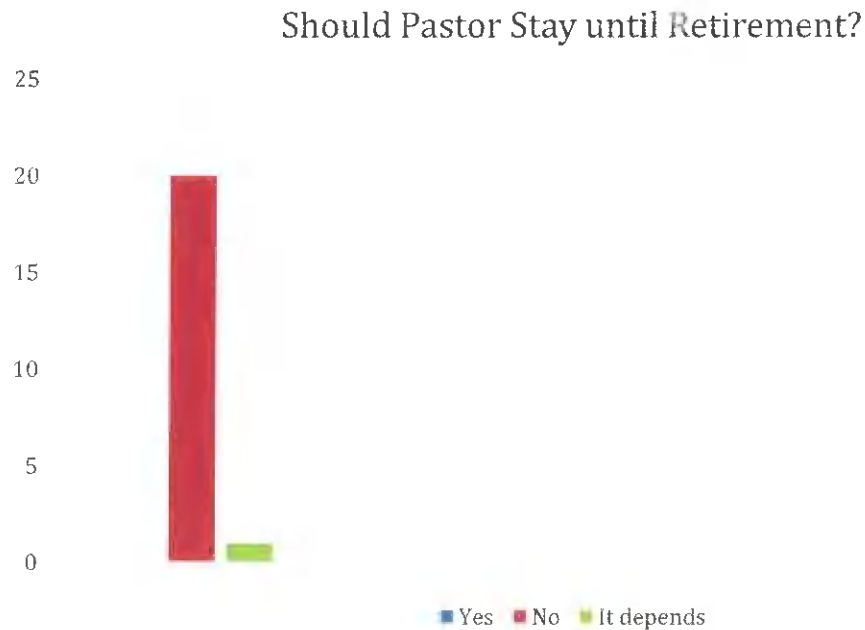


Table 2



From the Incoming Pastor's View

The majority of the pastors interviewed expressed the feeling that their predecessors did not support them or their vision for the church. Several did not even get to meet with the outgoing pastor to discuss the church before their installation and prior to the departure of the former pastor. The pastors felt that a show of support in public from the outgoing leader will be beneficial in the grieving and the healing process that the church goes through. They all stated that there is a need for the transition plan. Some feared that the outgoing leader may have even tried to undermine their ministry. While they all wanted the public demonstration of support from the outgoing pastor, they feared that it will not happen unless the conference or the higher organization makes it mandatory. The data indicates that such a meeting will be good not for just the pastor but for the grieving church members as well.

A Transition Experience in the Middle of this Project

On June 19, 2016, The Atlantic Union Constituency voted a series of major leadership changes in the administration of the Union. There was a change of all three executive officers. The treasurer had previously announced his retirement and the President and Executive Secretary were replaced. I was elected Executive Secretary and experienced the process of leadership transition while working on this proposed model. This unexpected change afforded me the opportunity to actually experience and implement most of the segments of this transition model at the Union level. The president, Executive Secretary and Treasurer followed the transition process outlined in this model except for one part. Indeed, the transition was initiated by the constituency and was chaired by the president of the higher organization, namely the North American Division. The second part of the model was not feasible because the North American Division administrators were from out of state, and this transition is not a practice or policy of the church. I did plan, schedule and had meetings in private and in public with my predecessor who gave me a very good debriefing about the position and promised to support me in any way he could.

Outcome

As mentioned in the Candidacy review proposal, the nature of this research required a span of time longer than six weeks. On February 23, 2016, I met with the context associates to explain and discuss their roles. We planned the timing of the assignments and their availability to discuss follow-up meetings after this project had been implemented.

On February 29, 2016, I had a meeting with two pastors in transition. We met with both the predecessor and his or her successor to explain to them the model of leadership transition and their participation in its implementation. They were very happy for the plan. This was a transition to a church within the Philadelphia district.

On March 4, 2016 from 4 to 6 p. m., a meeting was held with the local leaders of the church that is the subject of the pastoral leadership transition. The purpose of this meeting was to explain the new model of pastoral transition and how to implement it in their church. These same people were invited to the December 31, 2016 workshop/group assessment at the Philadelphia Church.

On March 12, 2016, I conducted a workshop for church leaders who came from forty different churches in the Northeast of the United States of America. The workshop presented the pastoral transition model to the leaders.

On Monday, April 18, 2016, a meeting with peer associates was held to discuss the project. On Wednesday, April 20, 2016, I met with mentor Dr. Williamson to discuss the project and review the results of the March workshop and evaluate the implementation of the project in the local church.

On Tuesday, April 26, 2016, a meeting was held with eight pastors in Montreal, Canada, from fourteen different churches to discuss the pastoral transition model. The pastors were very enthusiastic about the transition model.

On Tuesday, May 10, 2016, I met with context associates to discuss the project and the process so far in the church where the project is being implemented. We also reviewed the results of the workshop conducted with the local leaders from the forty

churches in the Northeast. They reviewed the questionnaires used in the surveys for the pastors and local church members.

On September 2, 2016, I conducted a workshop for a group of twenty-five people including members the Philadelphie Church. On December 31, 2016, a workshop and group assessment and evaluation of the proposed model for pastoral leadership transition was held.

Summary of Learning

The first semester of this program helped me to understand the personal undercurrents and variables that affected my life and guided my vocation and ministry. The intensive week and peer group sessions improved my ability to reflect on the many events and people that influenced my life up to this point. One of the teachers in essence stated repeatedly that everything we have gone through in life was in preparation for our ministry context. He gave several examples to show that even the challenges and misfortunes that we were experiencing in our context were the result of past experiences. He invited the students to share any problem they were having in their ministry context and demonstrated how something in their lives in effect prepared them for the issues they faced. God somehow equipped us for ministry in our context through the joys and pains of our lives. Some of these joys and pains may have been our own doing.

Semester two was to research and exegete the biblical foundation passages. The intensive classes and peer group meetings were critically important in the selection and research of the biblical foundation texts. The big challenge was to study a suitable historical personality in the history of our church that embodied the principles of the

pastoral transition model that I intended to research, develop and evaluate. The general sessions presentations and classes throughout the program were very effective and beneficial.

Semester three was enjoyable. It was time to research the theological foundation and learned how the Omnipresence of God applied to the theme and hypothesis of the model for pastoral transition. I learned the process of development and implementation of research methods. The progression continued through semester four when the elements of the model really took shape, and I began to prepare for candidacy review. Semester five was about the implementation and evaluation of the researched model and preparing the final document.

This project throughout opened my eyes and understanding of some of my previous actions during pastoral transitions. One such deed was in 2004 when we were transferred from a big church in Massachusetts to another big church in New York City. That pastoral transfer was neither desired nor expected. We were especially concerned with the effect on the little children who were very close to our family. One little child, upon hearing the announcement of our leaving the church, asked her parents: "If Jesus is going to leave the church?" On our last day in the church, as the departing pastoral family, we were asked to tell the story for the children. We brought our cat from home to the church and explained to the little children how much we loved our cat. We would not want to lose our cat for anything. However, we used to have another cat before this one. When we lost our first cat, we were so sad that we cried and cried. But Jesus sent this cat for us to replace the first one we lost, and now we love this one very much. We told them that they will not be seeing us any more every week, but someone else will come after us

to be their pastor. The children were very attentive and understood the message. In the end, they took turn petting our cat. We now realize how important that story must have been. We have learned through this project that the children are grieving too during pastoral transition. Their understanding of the continual presence of God is important for their spiritual growth and faith in the ecclesiastical system.

We also gained a healthier understanding of past negative reactions and behaviors of church members and pastors during contentious pastoral transitions. There were times when we thought certain pastors and members who were otherwise dependable, reasonable, kind and stable, reacted unreasonably and unkindly towards church authorities and towards each other. We recall being very stupefied at their display of disrespect and anger. We have now discovered that their uncharacteristically revolting and livid actions and behaviors during these transitions were because they were going through the various stages of grief. The pastoral transitions were not planned effectively and did not give them a chance to grieve.

Conclusion

I started this doctor of ministry program after twenty-seven years in ministry as a pastor and administrator of the church. Having preceded and succeeded others in sometimes turbulent transitions, I began with a desire to study, research and evaluate a transition model that would improve the way pastors go through transitions in the church. In the process, I learned a lot about myself. I realize that unconsciously, I was still aching and grieving from pastoral transitions that occurred in my childhood and during my professional life. The pain and grief, though suppressed, were nonetheless affecting the

way I related to my church members, my family and my colleagues in time of transition. This project brought back to my consciousness the memory of the grief experienced when my paternal grandmother died. I was about seven years old at the time with three younger siblings. There was chaos in the house while people were mourning and crying everywhere. The house was full of people who came to mourn with our family, and little did they realize that the children were grieving too. I was very close to my grandmother before her death. My father had constructed a special room for her to live in with us. She loved me so much that she would save a portion of her food for me every day. She was very special to me. When she died, I was grieving alone even though I was in a house full of people. As I worked on this project for pastoral transition, I realized that the sudden loss of a pastoral family that I never had a chance to really say good bye to, and the experience of the loss of my paternal grandmother forty-eight years ago, were events of life that I still needed to reconcile.

With the healing came the determination to help churches and pastoral families avoid the pitfalls that may accompany pastoral transition if not planned correctly. I have given special regards to the children in the church during pastoral transitions. Children suffer just as much, if not more, than adults; but they are often overlooked or left out of the transition planning process. They must be taken into consideration.

This project also changed me and changed itself in the course of its development. I first started developing a model for transition and succession. At some point I realized that I was researching succession while talking transition. This was probably because there are limited resources and literature about succession, but there is almost no resources and books about pastoral transition specifically. While the two can be related,

as the project developed, I discovered that pastoral transition and succession were two different projects. With that realization, some of the interview questions had to be redesigned and the wording of the survey questionnaire and the writing of the final document had to change. The workshop and group assessment meetings toward the end of the project became more specialized and specific in terms of pastoral transition.

One of the things that I would do differently if I were to start this project over would be to broaden the context from the local church to the Atlantic Union Conference where I serve as Executive Secretary. The church context presented certain logistically restrictive challenges for me. And given my broad base experience with transition, I wanted to include more people, more churches and institutions. I felt limited and wanted to expand; however, I learned that the model can be replicated in other church contexts and that will fulfil and satisfy that desire. I would like to continue to research the effectiveness of the model over several pastoral transitions in multiple churches.

One of my goals for the future after graduation and publication of the project, will be to write pastoral transition articles in various church magazines and other denominational and nondenominational publications. This model can be duplicated in most Protestant denominations. There is a lot more insights, materials and documents that cannot be included in this final document. The plan is to develop several parts of this research into future book publications and be a resource and consultant for pastoral transitions. There are too many leadership transitions that have been too poorly executed and have caused tremendous long-term pains and sufferings to too many people in our churches. By design, the components of this transition model are taken directly from the Bible in order to give it scriptural authority and facilitate its acceptance.

What was most surprising for me was the profound personal effect of the writing of the spiritual autobiography. I saw in myself what I did not know was hidden in my subconsciousness. What I most enjoyed was the discovery and writing of the biblical and theological foundations. The realization of the Omnipresence of God in the life of the church when pastors come and go brings deep consolation to the heart of those who work closely with and get attached to their spiritual leaders. I also greatly appreciated the networking and support of my peers and mentor.

I go from this program with the full knowledge that God is not finished with me yet. There will be more challenges to face and more lessons to learn. There will be more people to help and more experiences of joy and elations. There will certainly be churches to assist in planning and preparing better pastoral transitions that will contribute to greater understanding of the emotions of the people involved in the process of pastoral leadership changeovers. More importantly, there will be the assurance of God's Omnipresence in our lives individually and in the life of the church collectively. The certainty of God's presence will bring comfort and hope to our souls and will reminds us, when we transition from one pastor to another, or from one church to another, that "we have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."⁵ God will neither leave nor forsake the church in times of pastoral transitions.

⁵ White, *Life Sketches of Ellen*, 196.

APPENDIX A
PASTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Pastor's Survey Questionnaire: Pastoral Leadership Transitions

Instruction: This questionnaire is anonymous, uses the Embedded Mixed Methods research and includes both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Please circle, put a check mark or comment accordingly.

What has been your experience with pastoral leadership transition?

Please circle how many times have you transitioned from one church assignment to another. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

How has the transition affected your relationship with your successor or predecessor?

Did you want the move at the time you were reassigned? ____ Yes ____ No

Was there a transition period during which you and your successor met privately for briefing and prayer together before you were installed into the new position?

____ Yes ____ No

Did you meet publicly with your successor or predecessor prior to leaving your position?

____ Yes ____ No

Did your predecessor publicly ask the church leaders and members or constituents to support you as the incoming leader? ____ Yes ____ No

Is there a need for a Bible-based transition and succession process in the Seventh-day Adventist Church? ____ Yes ____ No

Did your successor support your vision for the church or the conference?

____ Yes ____ No

Did your predecessor support your vision for the church or the conference?

____ Yes ____ No

Did your predecessor warmly support you in front of the people? ____ Yes ____ No

Please write any additional comment:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

APPENDIX B
CHURCH MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE

Pastoral Leadership Transition Survey: Church Member Questionnaire

Instruction: This questionnaire is anonymous, uses the Embedded Mixed Methods research and includes both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Please circle, put a check mark or comment accordingly.

1. How many times has your pastor been changed since you have been in the church?

1. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10.

2. Did you like your former pastor? ____Yes ____No

3. Do you like your current pastor? ____Yes ____No

4. Do you consider your former pastor as your friend? ____Yes ____No

5. Does your relationship with a former pastor keep you from loving your current pastor?
____Yes ____No

6. What is the biggest challenge or problem with pastoral transfer/ transition? _____

7. Do you get attached to your pastors? ____Yes ____No

8. Do you agree that pastors should not be transferred but stay until retirement in your church? ____Yes ____No

9. How many years should one pastor stay in your church? 1-3 4-8 8-10 ____other

10. Have you been hurt by a pastoral transition since you have been in the church?

2. ____Yes ____No

11. Were you happy when your last pastor left your church? ____Yes ____No

12. Were you sad when your last pastor left your church? ____Yes ____No

13. How do you feel about pastoral transitions? _____

14. Has your family been negatively affected by pastoral changes in the past?

3. ____Yes ____No

Your church position: _____ Elder or department director _____ Other officers

_____ Church member

What is your age range? _____ 15-25 _____ 26-35 _____ 36-45 _____ 46-55

_____ 56-65 _____ 65-75 _____ 76-100

Please write any additional comment:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW WITH CHURCH ADMINSTRATOR

Interview with _____,

Thank you for taking time from your very busy schedule to speak with me today. As you know, I am working on a doctoral project to develop and evaluate a model for pastoral leadership transition in the church. This interview is part of this endeavor. Is it okay if I record our conversation for accurate reporting? Do I have your permission to record this interview? _____

In the book *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions*, Carolyn Weese and Russell Crabtree wrote that: “Every strategic plan should have a strategic target that lays out a transition strategy. The transition plan should have a clear set of actions, with accountability, time lines and a budget.”¹ What do you think about that statement?

Does the church in general and the North American Division in particular have an official pastoral leadership transition and plan? If yes, how is it implemented?

Given the fact that we are “the people of the Word” and in the Bible God always had a transition or succession plan, do you think the church would benefit from adopting a practical Bible-based pastoral transition plan? If yes, why and if no, why not?

You have succeeded and preceded others in various capacities in churches as pastor. Do you usually meet privately and/or publicly with your successors or predecessors to discuss the transitions?

Have your successors or predecessors always supported you in the past? In what ways did their support or lack of support helped or hurt your ministry or the church?

If you have also been involved in pastoral transitions as a local church leader, could you share with me lessons learned from your personal experiences with pastoral transition from the perspective of a church member?

Please give any advice, recommendation or suggestion that you deem necessary to help develop and evaluate a pastoral leadership transition model for our church.

Thank you again for your time and contribution. May God continue to bless you, your family and ministry.

¹ Weese and Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 23.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW WITH PASTOR

Interview with _____

Thank you Pastor for taking time from your busy schedule to speak with me today. As you know, I am working on a doctoral project to develop and evaluate a model for pastoral leadership transition for the church. This interview is part of this endeavor. Is it okay if I record our conversation for accurate reporting? Do I have your permission to record this interview? _____

In the book *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions*, Carolyn Weese and Russell Crabtree wrote that: “Every strategic plan should have a strategic target that lays out a transition strategy. The transition plan should have a clear set of actions, with accountability, time lines and a budget.”¹ What do you think about that statement?

What has been your experience with pastoral leadership transition?

Was there a transition period during which you and your successor met privately for briefing and prayer together before you were installed into the new position?

Did you meet publicly (in the presence of all the congregation) with your successor or predecessor prior to leaving your position?

Did your predecessor publicly ask the church leaders, members or constituents to support you as the incoming leader?

Is there a need for a Bible-based pastoral transition process in the church?

Did your successor support your vision for the church or the conference?

Did your predecessor support your vision for the church or the conference?

Did your predecessor/successor warmly support you in front of the people?

Any additional comment?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

¹ Weese and Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 23.

APPENDIX E
WORKSHOP ON LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

A Model for Pastoral Leadership Transition

The Church is the Apple of God's Eye

Those whom God has called to serve his church must “take care of God’s church” (1Tim 3.5). “Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20.28).

The Church is the Object of God's Supreme Regard

“I testify to my brethren and sisters that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard.”¹

We need Leaders who love the church enough to plan for a smooth pastoral transition and continuity of purpose.

Identifying marks of a spiritual leader

Of General Conference of Seventh Day Adventist Church)

- Has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- Derives vision through prayer and from God's Word
- Makes the Holy Spirit the first and foremost organizational consultant
- Integrates the Gospel into leadership style
- Leads from the perspective of God's abundance, not human scarcity
- Focuses on building consensus instead of convincing a majority
- Focuses on building the Kingdom of God
- Focuses on equipping himself or herself and other people for ministry
- Recognizes the inherent sinfulness of others, but accepts them in God's grace
- Allows the Holy Spirit to be the primary motivating force in ministry and lives of others²

The Biblical Model for Transition

- Moses – Joshua
- Saul – David
- David – Salomon
- Salomon – Rehoboam et Jeroboam
- Elijah – Elisha
- Paul - Timothy

¹ Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1962), 15.

² Ben Maxsons, “Spiritual Leadership,” Unpublished Paper, 2005, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.adventiststewardship.com>.

Jesus to His Disciples
 The Holy Spirit
 Peter

6 Steps of the Pastoral Transition Model

1. God or a higher organization is the initiator of the change or transition **Deuteronomy 3**

26 But because of you the Lord was angry with me and would not listen to me. "That is enough," the Lord said. "Do not speak to me anymore about this matter.

27 Go up to the top of Pisgah and look west and north and south and east. Look at the land with your own eyes, since you are not going to cross this Jordan.

28 But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see." (NIV)

Step #2

2. God meets with the outgoing leader.

The conference president or his designee meets with the outgoing pastor

Step #3

3. God meets with both incoming and outgoing leaders.

The President or his designee meets with both pastors.

Deuteronomy 31

14 The Lord said to Moses, "Now the day of your death is near. **Call Joshua and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, where I will commission him.**" So Moses and Joshua came and presented themselves at the tent of meeting.

15 Then the Lord appeared at the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the cloud stood over the entrance to the tent.

Step #4

4. The departing and outgoing pastor meet in private to plan, pray and strategize.

Step #5

5. Both pastors meet publicly.

The outgoing leader introduces the incoming leader to the congregation and pledges to support the ministry of his/her successor.

Deuteronomy 31: 7-8, 30

7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him **in the presence of all Israel**, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance.

8 The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

30 And Moses recited the words of this song from beginning to end **in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel:**

Step #6

6. Installation of the new pastor who builds on the accomplishment of his or her predecessor and does not seek to undermine the work of the predecessor

Joshua 1

Josué 1:3, 5

The Need for CONTINUITY

1 Corinthians 3:6-8

1 Corinthians 3:9-10

1 Corinthians 3:11

6 Components of the Pastoral Transition Model (recap)

1. God (higher power) is the initiator of the transition or the change
2. God meets with the departing pastor
3. God meets with both incoming and outgoing leader
4. Incoming and outgoing leaders meet in private to plan and pray together
5. Both leaders meet in public. The outgoing leader introduces the incoming leader to the church and pledges to support his or her successor's ministry
6. Installation of the new leader

God will never leave the church

The **Omnipresence** of God is the assurance of the church in times of transition. Leaders at all levels will come and go. Pastors will come and go, but God will always be there in the life of the church. God is the only, immortal and eternal Pastor of the church.

1 Timothy 1:17

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Final thought

“The higher the position a man occupies, the greater the responsibility that he has to bear, the wider will be the influence that he exerts and the greater his need of dependence on God. Position does not give holiness of character. It is by honoring God and obeying His commands that a man is made truly great. Of necessity, men must bear responsibilities; but instead of striving for the supremacy, he who is a true leader will pray for an understanding heart, to discern between good and evil” ³

³ Ellen White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917), 31,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION AND YOUR CONTRIBUTION

Questions and Comments

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